



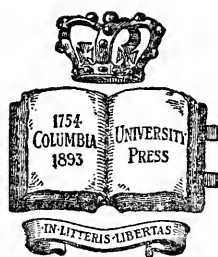
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY STUDIES IN ENGLISH

LEIGH HUNT'S RELATIONS WITH
BYRON, SHELLEY AND KEATS

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BY

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A. H. THORNDIKE,
Secretary.

PREFACE

The relations of Leigh Hunt to Byron, Shelley and Keats have been treated in a fragmentary way in various works of biography and criticism, and from many points of view. Yet hitherto there has been no attempt to construct a whole out of the parts. This led Professor Trent to suggest the subject to me about five years ago. The publication of the results of my investigation has been unfortunately delayed for nearly four years after the work was finished.

I am indebted to Mr. S. L. Wolff for reading the first and second chapters ; to Professors G. R. Krapp, W. W. Lawrence, A. H. Thorndike, of Columbia University, and Professor William Alan Nielson, now of Harvard, for suggestions throughout. I am especially glad to have this opportunity to record my gratitude to Prof. Trent, whose inspiration and guidance and kindness from beginning to end have alone made completion of the study possible.

B. M.

CONSTANTINOPLE, TURKEY.

March 21, 1910.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I. LEIGH HUNT 1784-1823.....	1
CHAPTER II. KEATS	32
CHAPTER III. SHELLEY	65
CHAPTER IV. BYRON AND <i>The Liberal</i>	88
CHAPTER V. THE COCKNEY SCHOOL	121
CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION	159
BIBLIOGRAPHY	164

CHAPTER 1

Revolutionary tendencies of the age—The Reaction—Counter Reform movement—Leigh Hunt—His Ancestry—School days—Career as a Journalist—Imprisonment—Finances—Politics—Religion—Poetry.

Since contemporary social conditions played an important part in the relations of Leigh Hunt with Byron, Shelley, and Keats, a brief survey of the period in question is necessary to an understanding of the forces at play on their intellect and conduct. The English mind had been admirably prepared for the principles of the French Revolution by the progressive tendency since the Revolution of 1688. The new order promised by France was acclaimed in England as one destined to right the wrongs of humanity; through unending progress mankind was to attain unlimited perfection. Upon such a prospect both parties were agreed, and the warnings of Burke were vain when Pitt, rationalizing, led the Tories, and Fox, rhapsodizing, led the Whigs. In 1793, Godwin's *Political Justice*, with its anarchistic doctrines of individual perfectibility and of individual self-reliance, rallied more recruits to the standard of liberty, though his theories of community of property and annulment of the marriage bond were somewhat charily received. The early writings of Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge were colored with enthusiasm for the new movement. The agitation and the enactment of reform measures made actual advances towards the expected millennium.

But the excesses of the Revolutionary régime in France bred in England, ever inclined to order, an opposition in many conservative minds that resulted in positive panic at the menace to state and church and property. The reaction swung the pendulum far in the opposite direction from justice and philanthropy. The first two decades of the new century continued to suffer from a counter-reform movement when the actual fright had subsided. During that period, anything which savored of reform was labelled as seditious. At the very be-

ginning of this reaction William Pitt's efforts for the extension of the franchise were summarily put an end to, and the House of Commons remained as little representative of the English people as formerly. Catholics and Non-Conformists were denied, from the period of the union of Ireland with England in 1800 until 1829, the right to vote and to hold office. Pitt's efforts to frustrate such discrimination in Ireland were as unavailing as in his own country, for the prejudices and obstinacy of George III, in both instances, neutralized the good intentions of the liberal Ministry. The corrupt influence of the Crown in Parliament was undiminished except by the disfranchisement of persons holding contracts from the crown and of incumbents of revenue offices. The wars with America and with France greatly increased the public debt, threatened the national credit and burdened with taxes an already overburdened people. Oppressive industrial conditions made the life of the masses still more unendurable. The rise of manufacturing and the consequent adoption of inventions that dispensed with much hand labor decreased the number of the employed and reduced wages, while the enormous increase in population during the eighteenth century multiplied the number of the idle and the poor. It is true that the wealth of the country became much greater through the development of new resources, but the profits were distributed among the few and gave no relief to the majority. The government was indifferent to the sufferings of the poor, to the severity of the penal code, to the horrors of the slave traffic. In Great Britain the Habeas Corpus act was suspended, public assemblies were forbidden, the press was more narrowly restricted, right of petition was limited, and the legal definition of treason was greatly extended; in Scotland the barbarous statute of transportation for political offenses was revived; in Ireland industry and commerce were discouraged.

The re-accession of the Tories to power in 1807, followed by their long ascendancy and abuse of power, led inevitably to a revival of the questions of revolution and of reform. Lord Byron, Shelley and Leigh Hunt were among the leaders of this second band of agitators, the "new camp," as Professor

Dowden has designated them. It was their love of humanity, perhaps to a greater degree than their poetic genius and their æsthetic ideals, that made these men akin. Of the four poets with whom we deal Keats alone was comparatively indifferent to the strife about him.

Besides the political background of the times, personal influence and literary imitation enter into consideration in the present study. Especially in the case of Hunt, whose unique personality has been so variously interpreted, a brief biographical review is necessary. James Henry Leigh Hunt was born October 19, 1784, in the village of Southgate, Middlesex. He was descended on the father's side from "Tory cavaliers" of West Indian adoption, and on the mother's from American Quakers of Irish extraction—an exotic combination of Celtic and Creole strains which never coalesced but in turn affected his temperament. His father was an engaging and gifted clergyman who quoted Horace and drank claret—a sanguine, careless child of the South who made the acquaintance alike of good society and of debtor's prisons. This parent's cheerfulness and courage were his most fortunate legacies to his son; a speculative turn in matters of religion and government and a general financial irresponsibility constituted his most unfortunate legacy. His mother was as shrinking as his father was convivial, but, like her husband, possessed a strong sense of duty and of loyalty. Her son inherited her love of books and of nature. Of his heritage from his parents Leigh Hunt wrote: "I may call myself, in every sense of the word . . . a son of mirth and melancholy; . . . And, indeed, as I do not remember to have ever seen my mother smile, except in sorrowful tenderness, so my father's shouts of laughter are now ringing in my ears."¹

As Leigh Hunt was heir to his ancestry in an unusual degree, so in an extraordinary measure was the child father of the man. The atmosphere of the home, tense with discussions of theology and politics and bitter with hardships of poverty and prisons, gave him a precocious acquaintance with weighty mat-

¹ *Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, I, p. 34.

ters and with many miseries. In 1791 he entered Christ's Hospital. Like Shelley he rebelled against the time-honored custom of fagging, and chose instead a beating every night with a knotted handkerchief. He avoided personal encounters in self-defense, but was valiant enough where others were concerned, or where a principle was involved. Haydon said: "He was a man who would have died at the stake for a principle, though he might have cried like a child from physical pain, and would have screamed still louder if he put his foot in the gutter! Yet not one iota of recantation would have quivered on his lips, if all the elysium of all the religions on earth had been offered and realized to induce him to do so."²

His wonderful power of forming friendships—a power with which the present study is so much concerned—was first developed at Christ's Hospital. As he sentimentally expressed it, "the first heavenly taste it gave me of that most spiritual of the affections. I use the word 'heavenly' advisedly; and I call friendship the most spiritual of the affections, because even one's kindred, in partaking of our flesh and blood, become, in a manner, mixed up with our entire being. Not that I would disparage any other form of affection, worshipping as I do, all forms of it, love in particular, which in its highest state, is friendship and something more. But if I ever tasted a disembodied transport on earth, it was in those friendships which I entertained at school, before I dreamt of any maturer feeling."³ Like Shelley, Hunt had so great an inclination to sentimentalize and idealize friendship that sometimes after the first brief rhapsody of fresh acquaintance he suffered bitter disillusionment. The majority, however, of the ties formed were lasting.⁴

² *Correspondence of Leigh Hunt*, I, p. 332.

³ *Autobiography*, I, p. 93. Compare the above quotation with Shelley's description of his first friendship. (Hogg, *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, pp. 23-24.

⁴ This early passion for friendship, which developed into a power of attracting men vastly more gifted than himself, brought about him besides Byron, Shelley and Keats, such men as Charles Lamb, Robert Browning, Carlyle, Dickens, Horace and James Smith, Charles Cowden Clarke, Vincent Novello, William Godwin, Macaulay, Thackeray, Lord Brougham, Bentham, Haydon,

The abridgements of the *Spectator*, set Hunt as a school task, instilled a dislike of prose-writing that may account for his preference through life for verse composition, although he was by nature less a poet than an essayist. From Cooke's edition of the *British Poets* he learned to love Gray, Collins, Thomson, Blair and Spenser—influences responsible in part for his dislike of eighteenth century convention and for his historical prominence in the romantic movement. Spenser later became the literary passion of his life. Other books which he read at this period were Tooke's *Pantheon*, Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*, and Spence's *Polymetis*, three favorites with Keats; *Peter Wilkins*, *Thalaba* and *German Romances*, three favorites with Shelley. Later Hunt and Shelley's reading was closely paralleled in Godwin's *Political Justice*, *Lucretius*, *Pliny*, *Plato*, *Aristotle*, *Voltaire*, *Condorcet* and the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*. With the years Hunt's list swelled to an almost incredible degree. It was through books that he knew life.

He left Christ Hospital in 1799. The eight years spent there were his only formal preparation for a literary profession. He greatly regretted his lack of a university education, but he consoled himself by quoting with true Cockney spirit Goldsmith's saying: "London is the first of Universities."⁵ Through his father's connections he met many prominent men in London and was made much of. This premature association accounts for some of the arrogance so conspicuous in his early journalistic work, which, in middle life, sobered down into a harmless vanity.

In 1808 Hunt started a Sunday newspaper, *The Examiner*. The letter tendering his resignation⁶ of a position in the office of the Secretary of War, coming from an inexperienced man of twenty-four is pompous in tone and heavy with the weight of his duty to the English nation. His subsequent assurance

Hazlitt, R. H. Horne, Sir John Swinburne, Lord John Russell, Bulwer Lytton, Thomas Moore, Barry Cornwall, Theodore Hook, J. Egerton Webbe, Thomas Campbell, the Olliers, Joseph Severn, Miss Edgeworth, Mrs. Gaskell, Mrs. Browning and Macvey Napier. Hawthorne, Emerson, James Russell Lowell and William Story sought him out when they were in London.

⁵ *Correspondence*, I, p. 49.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. 44.

and boldness resulted in 1812 in his being indicted for a libel of the Prince Regent, afterwards George IV, and in an imprisonment for two years dating from February 15, 1813. His elder brother John, the publisher of the paper, served the same sentence in a separate prison. They shared between them a fine of £1,000. By special dispensation Hunt's family was allowed to reside with him in prison and, stranger still, he was allowed to continue his work on the libellous journal. At the same time he wrote in jail the *Descent of Liberty* and part of the *Story of Rimini*. He transformed his prison yard into a garden and his prison room into a bower by papering the walls with trellises of roses and by coloring his ceiling like the sky. His books and piano-forte, his flowers and plaster casts surrounded him as at home. Old friends gathered about and new ones sought him as a martyr to the liberal cause.

But the picture has a darker side which it is necessary to notice in order to understand Hunt's personal relations. An imaginative and over-sensitive brain in a feeble body had peopled his childhood with creatures of fear, the precursors of the morbid fancies of later years. From 1805 to 1807 he suffered from a trouble that seems to have been mental rather than physical, probably a form of melancholia or hypochondria. He tortured himself with problems of metaphysics and philosophy. He was haunted with the hallucination that he was deficient in physical courage, and therefore subjected himself to all kinds of tests. At the beginning of his imprisonment he was suffering from a second attack of his malady. The injurious effects upon his health of close confinement at this time can be traced to the end of his life. After his release his morbid fear of cowardice and his habit of seclusion were so strong upon him that for months at a time he would not venture out upon the streets. Yet in spite of all this and of frequent illnesses, his animal spirits were invincible. His optimism was proverbial; indeed, it was a part of his religion. Coventry Patmore tells us that on entering a room and being presented to Hunt for the first time, he received the greeting "This is a beautiful world, Mr. Patmore."⁷ His wonderful

⁷ *Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*, ed. Basil Champney, I, p. 32.

fancy colored his life as it colored his poetry. With his flowers and his friends and his fancies he turned life into a perpetual Arcadia. It has been many times asserted that Leigh Hunt was morally weak. His self-depreciation is largely responsible for such assertions. It is true that he fell short of great accomplishment and that he was guilty of small foibles which Haydon exaggerated into "petticoat twaddling and Grandisonian cant."⁸ Yet the struggle and the suffering of his life show more virility and nobility than he is generally credited with, and prove that beneath a veneer of affectation lay strong and healthy qualities.

A second lasting and disastrous result that followed Hunt's incarceration and that greatly affected his relations with Byron and Shelley was the crippling of his finances. While it cannot be said that he ever showed any real business ability, yet, at the beginning of the trials for libel, his money matters were in fair condition. The heavy fine and costs permanently disabled him. In 1821 his affairs were in such a bad state that, with the hope of bettering them, he left England on a precarious journalistic venture, an injudicious step, the cause of which can be traced to the lingering effects of his labors in the cause of liberalism. From 1834 to 1840 his misfortunes reached a climax. He sold his books to get something to eat. The pain of giving up his beloved *Parnaso Italiano* was like that of a violinist parting with his instrument. He lived in continual fear of arrest for debt. At the same time, family troubles and ill-health combined to torment him.

In 1844 Sir Percy Shelley gave him an annuity of £120, and in 1847, the same year of the benefit performance of *Every Man in His Humour*, he was granted through the efforts of Lord John Russell, Macaulay and Carlyle, an annual pension of £200 on the Civil List. There were also two separate grants of £200 each from the Royal Bounty, one from William IV, and the other from Queen Victoria. In his last years there is no mention made of want.⁹

⁸ *Life, Letters and Table Talk of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, ed. by Stoddard, p. 232.

⁹ *Correspondence*, I, p. 272.

Hunt's attitude in respect to money obligations was unique, but well-defined and consistent. It was not, as is often inferred, either puling or unscrupulous.¹⁰ He was absolutely incapable of the Skimpole vices.¹¹ His dilemmas were not due to indolence. On the contrary, he labored indefatigably as results show. The trouble was his "lugger-mugger" management, as Carlyle expressed it. He adopted William Godwin's doctrine that the distribution of property should depend on justice and necessity, and thought with him that the teachers of religion were pernicious in treating the practice of justice "not as a debt, but as an affair of spontaneous generosity and bounty. They have called upon the rich to be clement and merciful to the poor. The consequence of this has been that the rich, when they bestowed the slender pittance of their enor-

¹⁰ On once being accused of speculation Hunt replied that he had never been "in a market of any kind but to buy an apple or a flower." (*Atlantic Monthly*, LIV, p. 470.) Nor did Hunt admire money-getting propensities in others. He said of Americans: "they know nothing so beautiful as the ledger, no picture so lively as the national coin, no music so animating as the chink of a purse." (*The Examiner*, 1808, p. 721.)

¹¹ Dickens did Hunt an irreparable injury in caricaturing him as Harold Skimpole. The character bore such an unmistakable likeness to Hunt that it was recognized by every one who knew him, yet the weaknesses and vices were greatly multiplied and exaggerated. Before the appearance of *Bleak House*, Dickens wrote Hunt in a letter which accompanied the presentation copies of *Oliver Twist* and the New American edition of the *Pickwick Papers*: "You are an old stager in works, but a young one in faith—faith in all beautiful and excellent things. If you can only find in that green heart of yours to tell me one of these days, that you have met, in wading through the accompanying trifles, with anything that felt like a vibration of the old chord you have touched so often and sounded so well, you will confer the truest gratification on your old friend, Charles Dickens." (*Littell's Living Age*, CXCIV, p. 134.)

His apology after Hunt's death was complete, but it could not destroy the lasting memory of an immortal portrait. He wrote: "a man who had the courage to take his stand against power on behalf of right—who in the midst of the sorest temptations, maintained his honesty unblemished by a single stain—who, in all public and private transactions, was the very soul of truth and honour—who never bartered his opinion or betrayed his friend—could not have been a weak man; for weakness is always treacherous and false, because it has not the power to resist."

(*All The Year Round*, April 12, 1862.)

mous wealth in acts of charity, as they were called, took merit to themselves for what they gave, instead of considering themselves delinquents for what they withheld."¹² Godwin held gratitude to be a superstition.

Consequently, when in need, Hunt thought he had a right to assistance from such friends as had the wherewithal to give. He accepted obligations, as will be shown in the following chapters, much as a matter of course.¹³ But even in his worst distresses, he never desired nor accepted promiscuous charity; and he did not always willingly accept aid even from his friends. He refused offers of help from Trelawney. He returned a bank bill sent him by his sister-in-law, £5 sent by De Wilde as part of the Compensation Fund, and \$500 presented by James Russell Lowell. In 1832 Reynell forfeited £200 as security for Hunt. Twenty years later, on the payment of the first installment of the Shelley legacy, Hunt discharged the debt.¹⁴ He rejected several offers to pay his fine at the time of his imprisonment.¹⁵ Mary Shelley, who more than any one had cause to complain of Hunt's attitude in money matters, wrote in 1844 in announcing to him the forthcoming annuity from her son: "I know your real delicacy about money matters."¹⁶

In the *Correspondence* there are mysterious allusions made by Hunt and by his son Thornton to a veiled influence on Hunt's

¹² Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, Book VIII, Chap. I.

¹³ Prof. Saintsbury has very plausibly suggested that a similar attitude in Godwin, Coleridge and Southey in respect to financial assistance was a legacy from patronage days. (*A History of Nineteenth Century Literature*, p. 33.) The same might be said of Hunt.

¹⁴ S. C. Hall, *A Book of Memories of Great Men and Women of the Age, from Personal Acquaintance*, p. 247.

¹⁵ His feeling on the subject is set forth clearly in a letter where he is writing of the generosity of Dr. Brocklesby to Johnson and Burke: "The extension of obligations of this latter kind is, for many obvious reasons, not to be desired. The necessity on the one side must be of as peculiar, and, so to speak, of as noble a kind as the generosity on the other; and special care would be taken by a necessity of that kind, that the generosity should be equalled by the means. But where the circumstances have occurred, it is delightful to record them." (Hunt, *Men, Women and Books*, p. 217.)

¹⁶ *Correspondence*, II, p. 11.

life, to some one who acted as trustee for him and who, without his knowledge or consent, made indiscriminating appeals in his behalf. The discovery of refusals and repulses led him to write the following to William Story, through whom came Lowell's offer: "Nor do I think the man truly generous who cannot both give and receive. But, my dear Story, my heart has been deeply wounded, some time^e back, in consequence of being supposed to carry such opinions to a practical extreme. . . . It gave me a shock so great that, as long as I live, it will be impossible for me to forego the hope of outliving all similar chances, by conduct which none can misinterpret."¹⁷

Leigh Hunt's work which comes into the period of his association with Byron, Shelley and Keats falls into four divisions: his theatrical criticism, his political journals, his poetry and his miscellaneous essays. The first and the last, although important in themselves, do not enter into his relations with the three men in question and will not be considered here. His political activity is important in his relations with Byron and Shelley; his poetry in his relations with Keats and Shelley.

In Leigh Hunt's career, the stepmost significant in its far-reaching effects was the establishment of *The Examiner*.¹⁸ Its professed object was the discussion of politics. It contained, in addition to foreign and provincial intelligence, criticism of the theatre, of literature, and of the fine arts. Full reports were given of the proceedings in Parliament. At different times, various series of articles appeared, such as the *Essays on Methodism* by Hunt, and *The Round Table* by Hunt and Hazlitt. Fox-Bourne says that previous to Hunt's *Examiner* there had been weeklies or "essay sheets" such as Defoe, Steele, Addison and Goldsmith had developed, and that there had been dailies or "news sheets" which gave bare facts, but that *The Examiner* was the first to give the news faithfully in

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, II, p. 271.

¹⁸ Hunt's work as a political journalist had begun in 1806 with *The Statesman*, a joint enterprise with his brother. It was very short-lived and is now very scarce. Perhaps it is due to this rarity that it is not usually mentioned in bibliographies of Hunt.

essay style.¹⁹ It soon raised the character of the weeklies. During the first year the circulation reached 2,200, a large number at that time. Carlyle said: "I well remember how its weekly coming was looked for in our village in Scotland. The place of its delivery was besieged by an eager crowd, and its columns furnished the town talk till the next number came."²⁰ Redding says "everybody in those days read *The Examiner*."²¹

The prospectus contained a severe criticism of contemporary journalism:²²

"mean in its subserviency to the follies of the day, very miserably merry in its fuss and stories, extremely furious in politics, and quite as feeble in criticism. You are invited to a literary conversation, and you find nothing but scandal and commonplace. There is a flourish of trumpets, and enter Tom Thumb. There is an earthquake and a worm is thrown up . . . The gentleman who until lately conducted the THEATRICAL DEPARTMENT in the *News* will criticise the Theatre in the EXAMINER; and as the public have allowed the possibility of IMPARTIALITY in that department, we do not see why the same possibility may not be obtained in POLITICS."

Then followed a declaration against party as a factor in politics: party, it was declared, should not exist "abstracted from its utility"; in the present day every man must belong to some class; "he is either Pittite or Foxite, Windhamite, Wilberforce or Burdettite; though, at the same time, two thirds of these disturbers of coffee-houses might with as much reason call themselves Hivites, or Shunamites, or perhaps Bedlamites."²³ Although *The Examiner* thus firmly announced its intentions, nevertheless in the heat of political contest it soon became the organ of a group of men known as "reformers," who were laboring and clamoring for constitutional and administrative improvement. It became the avowed enemy of the Tory party and its journals, and in particular of the ministry during the

¹⁹ H. R. Fox-Bourne, *English Newspapers*, I, p. 376.

²⁰ *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, XL, p. 256.

²¹ Redding, *Personal Reminiscences of Eminent Men*, p. 184, ff.

²² Contemporary dailies were the *Morning Chronicle*, *Morning Post*, *Morning Herald*, *Morning Advertiser*, and the *Times*. In 1813 there were sixteen Sunday weeklies. Among the weeklies published on other days, the *Observer* and the *News* were conspicuous. In all, there were in the year 1813, fifty-six newspapers circulating in London. (Andrews, *History of British Journalism*, Vol. II, p. 76.)

²³ *The Examiner*, January 3, 1808.

long Tory ascendancy; the enemy, at times, of royalty itself.

The prospectus likewise announced an intention to reform the manners and morals of the age. Hunt could write a sermon with the same ease as a song or a satire. Horse-racing, cock-fighting and prize-fighting were condemned; most of all the publication of scandal and crime. A passage on advertisements is humorous and still of living interest:

"the public shall neither be tempted to listen to somebody in the shape of wit who turns out to be a lottery-keeper, nor seduced to hear a magnificent oration which finishes by retreating into a peruke, or rolling off into a blacking ball . . . and as there is perhaps about one person in a hundred who is pleased to see two or three columns occupied with the mutabilities of cotton and the vicissitudes of leather, the proprietors will have as little to do with bulls and raw-hides, as with lottery-men and wig-makers."

The editorials, which occupied the foremost columns of the paper, attacked corruption and injustice of every kind without respect of persons, currying favor with neither party nor individual, and laboring above all for the people. International relations and continental conditions were kept track of, but chief prominence was given to domestic affairs. The editor warred against all abuses of power in the cabinet and in all offices under the crown. In particular he attacked with merciless persistence the Prince Regent in regard to his private life and his public conduct, and his brother Frederick, the Duke of York, for his inefficiency as Commander-in-Chief of the army.²⁴ His definition of the English Army was "a host of laced jackets and long pigtails."²⁵ He condemned the numerous subsidies of the crown, the royal pensions and salaries for nominal service. He ridiculed the divine right of kings and exposed court scandal and immorality. The chief measures

²⁴ On the subject of military depravity *The Examiner* contained the following: "The presiding genius of army government has become a perfect Falstaff, a carcass of corruption, full of sottishness and selfishness, preying upon the hard labour of honest men, and never to be moved but by its lust for money; and the time has come when either the vices of one man must be sacrificed to the military honour of the country, or the military honour of the country must be sacrificed to the vices of one man." (*The Examiner*, October 23, 1808.)

²⁵ *The Examiner*, April 10, 1808.

for which he labored were Catholic Emancipation; reform of Parliamentary representation; liberty of the press; reduction and equalization of taxes; greater discretion in increasing the public debt; education of the poor and amelioration of their sufferings; abolition of child-labor and of the slave trade; reform of military discipline, of prison conditions, and of the criminal and civil laws, particularly those governing debtors.

It is not a matter of marvel that the paper made hosts of enemies on every side. Charges of libel quickly followed its onslaughts. Before the paper was a year old a prosecution was begun in connection with the Major Hogan and Mrs. Clarke case,²⁶ but it was dropped when an investigation was begun by the House of Commons. Within a year's time after this prosecution a second indictment was brought because of the sentence: "Of all monarchs since the Revolution the successor of George the Third will have the finest opportunity of becoming nobly popular."²⁷ The *Morning Chronicle* copied it, and was indicted, but both cases were dismissed. The third offense was the quotation of an article by John Scott on the cruelty of military flogging²⁸ but, like the others, this prosecution came to nothing.

The fourth and most disastrous misdemeanor was libel of the Prince Regent, a man of shocking morals and of unstable character. Before his appointment as Regent he had leaned to the Whig party and advocated Catholic Emancipation, but at his accession to power he retained the Tory ministry. The Whigs were greatly angered in consequence, and *The Examiner* took

²⁶ Maj. Hogan, an Irishman in the English Army, unable to gain promotion by the customary method of purchase, after a personal appeal to the Duke of York, commander-in-chief of the army, gave an account of his grievances in a pamphlet entitled, *Appeal to the Public and a Farewell Address to the Army*. Before it appeared Mrs. Clarke, the mistress of the Duke of York, sent Maj. Hogan £500 to suppress it. He returned the money and made public the offer. The subsequent investigation showed that Mrs. Clarke was in the habit of securing through her influence with the commander-in-chief promotion for those who would pay her for it. After these disclosures, the Duke resigned. *The Examiner* sturdily supported Maj. Hogan as one who refused to owe promotion "to low intrigue or petticoat influence." It likened Mrs. Clarke to Mme. Du Barry and called the Duke her tool.

²⁷ *The Examiner*, October 8, 1809. ²⁸ *Ibid.*, March 31, 1811.

it upon itself to voice their indignation.²⁹ At a dinner given at the Freemason's Tavern on St. Patrick's day, March 22, 1812, Lord Moira, an old friend of the Prince's, omitted mentioning him in his speech. Later, when a toast was proposed to the Prince, it was greeted with hisses. Mr. Sheridan, because of Lord Moira's omission, spoke later in the evening in defense of the Regent, but he, too, was received with hisses. The *Morning Chronicle* reported the dinner; the *Morning Post* replied with fulsome praise of the Prince; *The Examiner* with its usual alacrity joined in the fray and took sides with the *Chronicle*, dissecting, phrase by phrase, the adulation heaped upon the Prince by the *Post*. The following is the bitterest part of the polemic against him:

"What person, unacquainted with the true state of the case, would imagine, in reading these astounding eulogies, that this 'Glory of the people' was the subject of millions of shrugs and reproaches!—that this 'Protector of the arts' had named a wretched foreigner his historical painter, in disparagement or in ignorance of the merits of his own countrymen!—that this 'Mæcenas of the age' patronized not a single deserving writer!—that this 'Breather of eloquence' could not say a few decent extempore words, if we are to judge, at least, from what he said to his regiment on its embarkation for Portugal!—that this 'Conqueror of hearts' was the dissembler of hopes!—that this 'Exciter of desire' [bravo! Messieurs of the Post!]—this 'Adonis in loveliness', was a corpulent man of fifty!—in short, this *delightful, blissful, wise, pleasurable, honourable, virtuous, true and immortal* prince, was a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in disgrace, a dispiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demireps, a man who has just closed half a century without one single claim on the gratitude of his country, or the respect of posterity!"³⁰

²⁹ "Surely it is too gross to suppose that the Prince of Wales, the friend of Fox, can have been affecting habits of thinking, and indulging habits of intimacy, which he is to give up at a moment's notice for nobody knows what:—surely it cannot be, that the Prince Regent, the Whig Prince, the friend of Ireland—the friend of Fox,—the liberal, the tolerant, experienced large-minded Heir Apparent, can retain in power the very men, against whose opinions he has repeatedly declared himself, and whose retention in power hitherto he has explicitly stated to be owing solely to a feeling of delicacy with respect to his father." (*The Examiner*, February 28, 1812.)

³⁰ *The Examiner*, March 12, 1812. The contention between Canon Ainger and Mr. Gosse in respect to Charles Lamb's supposed part in this libel is set forth in *The Athenæum* of March 23, 1889. Mr. Gosse's evidence came through Robert Browning from John Forster, who first told Browning as early as 1837 that Lamb was concerned in it.

It was said that the chief offense was given by the statement that "this 'Adonis in loveliness' was a corpulent man of fifty." The article, although true, was of doubtful expediency and offensively violent and personal. Further, the unremitting attacks of *The Examiner* had been neither dignified nor charitable in their searchlight penetration into the Prince's private affairs.³¹ An indictment for libel naturally followed at once. Lord Brougham's "masterly defense"³² failed to avert the determined efforts of the prosecution to make an example of the editor and the publisher of *The Examiner*. They were sentenced to the imprisonment and fine already mentioned. They refused all overtures for alleviation of the sentence:—overtures from the government; from the Whigs who, in the person of Perry of the *Morning Chronicle*, proposed to obtain a compromise from the prosecution by threatening the Regent with the publication of state secrets from friends; and even from a juror who offered to pay the fine. Leigh Hunt wrote: "I am an Englishman setting an example to my children and my country; and it would be hard, under all these circumstances, if I could not suffer my extremity rather than disgrace myself by effeminate lamentation or worse compromise."³³ The two Hunts thought that the serving of the sentence would be beneficial to the liberal cause, particularly in increasing the freedom of the press.

The general method of *The Examiner* was vigorous attack. There was no circumlocution, no mincing of language, but aggressive candour, and, when it was considered necessary, wholesale censure and vituperation. A typical illustration is given in this passage, describing a dinner of the Common Council:

"It is the fashion just now to call Bonaparte Antichrist, the Beast with Seven Heads and Ten Horns, . . . but if you wish to see those who have the 'real mark of the beast' upon them, go to a City dinner, and

³¹ Mr. Monkhouse says that it was then politically unjustifiable (*Life of Leigh Hunt*, p. 88.)

³² Brougham wrote of his intended defense, "it will be a thousand times more unpleasant than the libel." For a narration of his friendship for Hunt, see *Temple Bar*, June, 1876.

³³ *The Examiner*, February 7, 1813.

after battles for trout and the buffetings for turtle, after the rattling of wine glasses and plethoric throats, after the swillings and the gormandizings, and the maudlin hobs-and-nobs, and the disquisitions on smothered rabbits, and the bloated hectics, and the blinking eyes and slurred voices, and the hiccups, the rantings, and the roars, hear an unwieldy Loan-jobber decanting on our Glorious King and Unshaken Constitution. The stranger, that after this sight, goes to see the beasts in the Tower, is an enemy to all true climax."³⁴

In actual results *The Examiner* accomplished a great deal in the counter movement for reform. While Hunt had no original or constructive political theory, little power of philosophical or logical thought, and no special equipment besides wide general knowledge, he had great sincerity and courage and a defiant attitude toward corruption of all kinds.³⁵ He was himself absolutely incorruptible. If he preferred any form of government above another—for he was more interested in the pure administration of an established government than in the form itself—his preference was for a liberal monarchy. Notwithstanding this moderate attitude, *The Examiner* was accused of radical, even revolutionary opinions. It was charged with being an enemy of the constitution, a traitor to the king, a foe to the established church.³⁶ Hunt's positive achievement in political journalism was two-fold: he obtained additional freedom for the press and he elevated journalistic style to a literary level. Monkhouse says that Hunt "established for the first time a paper which fought, and fought effectively, with prejudice and privilege, with superstition and tyranny, which was a bearer of light to all men of Liberal principles in that country, and set the example of the independent thought and fearless expression of opinion, which has since become the very light and power of the press."³⁷ Of the Hunt brothers Coventry Patmore writes: "I verily believe that, without the manly firmness, the immaculate political honesty, and the vigorous good sense of the one, and the exquisite genius and varied accomplishments, guided by the all-pervading and all-embracing humanity of the other, we should at this moment

³⁴ *The Examiner*, December 10, 1809.

³⁵ *Correspondence*, I, p. 179.

³⁶ *The Reflector* I, p. 5.

³⁷ Monkhouse, *Life of Leigh Hunt*, p. 79.

have been without many of those writers and thinkers on whose unceasing efforts the slow but sure march of our political, and with it, our social regeneration as a people mainly depends."³⁸

Hunt assisted in bringing about reforms in the interest of the people by calling attention to abuses that demanded investigation, and by advocating correction. His ideas on national finance and practical administration are wonderful when contrasted with his inefficiency in his own affairs. He lacked largeness of perspective and masculine grasp. His work is all the more remarkable when his temperament and tastes are considered; for his was a nature, as Professor Dowden has put it, "framed less for the rough and tumble of English radical politics than for 'dance and Provençal Song and sunburnt mirth.'" As a factor in the reform movement begun in the first decade of the nineteenth century Leigh Hunt has not yet come into his own.³⁹ His was no cosmic theory, nor search after the origin of evil, nor magnificent rebellion like Shelley's and Byron's; but in his own smaller way he played as courageous and as effective a part in the cause of liberty as those greater spirits.⁴⁰

In 1810, the two brothers had established a quarterly, *The Reflector*, of much the same nature and creed as *The Examiner*. It was unsuccessful and was discontinued after the fourth

³⁸ Patmore, *My Friends and Acquaintance*, III, p. 101.

³⁹ The *Edinburgh Review* of May, 1823, in an article entitled *The Periodical Press* ranked Hunt next to Cobbett in talent and *The Examiner* as the ablest and most respectable of weekly publications, when allowance had been made for the occasional twaddle and flippancy, the mawkishness about firesides and Bonaparte, and the sickly sonnet-writing.

⁴⁰ Mazzini wrote Hunt: "Your name is known to many of my Countrymen; it would no doubt impart an additional value to the thoughts embodied in the League. [International League.] It is the name not only of a patriot, but of a high literary man and a poet. It would show at once that *natural* questions are questions not of merely *political* tendencies, but of feeling, eternal trust, and Godlike poetry. It would show that poets understand their active mission down here, and that they are also prophets and apostles of things to come. I was told only to-day that you had been asked to be a member of the League's Council, and feel a want to express the joy I too would feel at your assent." (*Cornhill Magazine*, LXV, p. 480 ff.)

number. It differed from its predecessor in combining literature with politics. Hunt's reason for this innovation displays a rare power to judge of contemporary movements: "Politics, in times like these, should naturally take the lead in periodical discussion, because they have an importance almost unexampled in history, and because *they are now, in their turn, exhibiting their reaction upon literature, as literature in the preceding age exhibited its action upon them.*"⁴¹

Although Hunt continued to be editor of *The Examiner* until he went to Italy in 1822, his aggressive political activity seemed to die out of him after his release from prison. He was never so prominently again before the public; in 1828, he ceased altogether to write on political questions. He retired more and more into the seclusion of his books, and from about 1849, denied himself to all but a small circle of congenial spirits.

Hunt, like the others of his group, was deeply influenced by the liberal movement in religion as well as in politics. He had seen his father's progress from the Anglican Church through the Unitarian⁴² to the Universalist. At the age of twelve he repudiated the doctrine of eternal punishment and declared himself a believer in the "exclusive goodness of futurity." In his early manhood he decried the superstition of Catholicism, the intolerance of Calvinism, and the emotionality of Methodism. Yet he acknowledged a Great First Cause and a Divine Paternity. He refused, like Shelley, to recognize the existence of evil, and thought everything finally good and beautiful in nature.⁴³ He believed that universal happiness would come

⁴¹ *The Reflector*, I, p. 5.

⁴² Hunt accepted the *Monthly Repository* in 1837 as a gift from W. J. Fox in order to free it from Unitarian influence. Carlyle, Landor, Brown-ing and Miss Martineau were contributors.

⁴³ (1) "Besides, it is my firm belief—as firm as the absence of positive, tangible proof can let it be (and if we had that, we should all kill ourselves, like Plato's scholars, and go and enjoy heaven at once), that whatsoever of just and affectionate the mind of man is made by nature to desire, is made by her to be realized, and that this is the special good, beauty and glory of that illimitable thing called space—in her there is room for everything." *Correspondence*, II, p. 57.

(2) And Faith, some day, will all in love be shown. ("Abraham and the Fire-Worshipper," (*Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt*, 1857, p. 135.)

about through individual excellence, through performance of duty and avoidance of excess. Those who disagreed with him in this respect he considered blasphemers of nature. As Lord Houghton in his address in the cemetery of Kensal Green on the unveiling of a bust of Hunt remarked, he had an "absolute superstition for good." Similar testimony was borne by R. H. Horne when he said that Chaucer's "'Ah, benedicite' was falling forever from his lips."⁴⁴ His religion was one of charity and cheerfulness, of love and truth, which is but to affirm that the humanitarian moral of *Abou Ben Adhem* was realized in his own life.⁴⁵ On the death of Shelley's child William, Hunt wrote to the bereaved father: "I do not know that a soul is born with us; but we seem, to me, to *attain* to a soul, some later, some earlier; and when we have got that, there is a look in our eye, a sympathy in our cheerfulness, and a yearning and grave beauty in our thoughtfulness that seems to say, 'Our mortal dress may fall off when it will; our trunk and our leaves may go; we have shot up our blossom into an immortal air.'⁴⁶

Hunt, like Byron and Shelley, had curious ideas about the relation of the sexes, ideas which Hazlitt said, were "always coming out like a rash."⁴⁷ This "crotchet" was taken over likewise from Godwin, who thought it checked the progress of the mind for one individual to be obliged to live for a long period in conformity to the desires of another and therefore disapproved of the marriage relation. But, like Godwin and Shelley, Hunt bowed to the conventions. His life was a singularly pure one.

The influence of Hunt's poetry upon Keats and Shelley, in its general romantic tendencies, particularly in respect to diction and metre, deserves equal consideration with the influence of his politics upon Shelley and Byron. *Juvenilia*, a volume of

⁴⁴ *A New Spirit of the Age*, II, p. 183.

⁴⁵ Hunt wrote two religious books, *Christianism and Religion of the Heart*. The second, which is an expansion of the first, contains a ritual of daily and weekly service. For the most part it contains reflections on duty and service.

⁴⁶ *Correspondence*, I, p. 130.

⁴⁷ Bryan Waller Proctor (Barry Cornwall), *An Autobiographical Fragment and Biographical Notes*, p. 197.

Hunt's poems collected by his father and issued by subscription in 1801 contains original work and translations which show wide reading for a boy of seventeen and some fluency in versification. Otherwise the writer's own opinion in 1850 is correct: "My work was a heap of imitations, all but absolutely worthless. . . . I wrote 'odes' because Collins and Gray had written them, 'pastorals' because Pope had written them, 'blank verse' because Akenside and Thomson had written blank verse, and a 'Palace of Pleasure' because Spenser had written a 'Bower of Bliss.'" ⁴⁸ Hunt's chief defect in taste, that of introducing in the midst of highly poetical conceptions, disagreeable physical conditions or symptoms, is as conspicuous in this volume ⁴⁹ as in his more mature work.

The *Feast of the Poets*, 1814, ⁵⁰ is a light satire in the manner of Sir John Suckling's *Session of the Poets*. It spares few poets since the days of Milton and Dryden, and it includes in its revilings most of Hunt's contemporaries. Gifford, the editor of the *Quarterly Review*, comes in for the worst castigation. It is not remarkable that the satire antagonized people on every side in the literary world as *The Examiner* had done in the political. Hunt believed that "its offences, both of commission and of omission, gave rise to some of the most inveterate enmities" of his life. ⁵¹ It is important in the history to be discussed in a later chapter of the literary feud which resulted in the creation of the so-called Cockney School. Later revisions included some poets who had been intentionally ignored at first in both poems and notes, or who, like Shelley and Keats, naturally would not have been included in the 1814 edition; and it softened down the harsh criticism of those who were unfortunate enough to have been included, except Gifford, whom Hunt could never forgive. The irony is fresh and there are occasional spicy flashes of wit. The narrative is clear and the characterization vivid. Byron pronounced it "the best Session we have." ⁵²

⁴⁸ *Autobiography*, I, p. 119-120.

⁴⁹ *A Morning Walk and View; Sonnet on the Sickness of Eliza*.

⁵⁰ It had appeared previously in *The Reflector*, No. 4, article 10. In the separate edition it was expanded and 126 pages of notes were added.

⁵¹ *Poetical Works*, 1832, preface, p. 48.

⁵² Byron, *Letters and Journals*, III, p. 28, February 9, 1814.

The *Descent of Liberty*,⁵³ 1815, is a masque celebrating the triumph of Liberty, in the person of the Allies, over the Enchanter, Napoleon. There is little plot or human interest; the natural, the supernatural, and the mythical are confusedly interwoven. The pictorial effect, however, is one of great richness and color, and some of the songs and passages have fine lyrical feeling and melody. It is interesting in this connection to note a vague general resemblance between the *Descent of Liberty* and Shelley's *Queen Mab* (1812-13) in the worship of Liberty, in the hope and promise of her ultimate triumph, and in the wild imagination which Hunt probably never again equalled. It is not likely, however, that Hunt knew Shelley's poem at the time he was writing his own.

The Story of Rimini, produced in 1816 and dedicated to Lord Byron, is the most important of Hunt's works in a consideration of his relations with the enemies of the Cockney School⁵⁴ and with Byron, Shelley, and Keats. Byron criticised it severely. Shelley thought it carried uncommon and irresistible interest with it, but he agreed with Byron in thinking that the style had fettered Hunt's genius.⁵⁵ Keats wrote a sonnet⁵⁶ on *Rimini* in 1817, and in his own works shows unmistakably the influence of Hunt's poem in diction and versification.

The story is founded, of course, on the Francesca episode in the fifth canto of the *Inferno* of Dante. It was a dangerous

⁵³ The same volume contained a preface on the origin and history of masques and an *Ode for the Spring of 1814*. Byron said of the latter that the "expressions were *buckram* except here and there." The masque, he thought, contained "not only poetry and thought in the body, but much research and good old reading in your prefatory matter." Byron, *Letters and Journals*, III, p. 200, June 1, 1815.

⁵⁴ See chapter V, p. 19.

⁵⁵ Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 330.

⁵⁶ Who loves to peer up at the morning sun,
With half-shut eyes and comfortable cheek,
Let him, with this sweet tale, full often seek
For meadows where the little rivers run;
Who loves to linger with the brightest one
Of Heaven (Hesperus) let him lowly speak
These numbers to the night, and starlight meek,

thing for Hunt to undertake an elaboration of the marvelous episode of Dante. Had he been a man of greater genius it would have been a risk; as it was, he produced a diffuse and sentimental narrative which bears little resemblance to the singular perfection of the original. On the other hand, the *Story of Rimini* does possess indubitable merits: directness of narrative, minute observation, sensuous richness of pictorial description, and occasional delicate felicity of language.⁵⁷ Byron wrote of the third canto which he saw in manuscript:

"You have excelled yourself—if not all your contemporaries—in the canto which I have just finished. I think it above the former books; but that is as it should be; it rises with the subject, the conception seems to me perfect, and the execution perhaps as nearly so as verse will admit. There is more originality than I recollect to have seen elsewhere within the same compass, and frequent and great happiness of expression." The faults he said were "occasional quaintnesses and obscurity, and a kind of harsh and yet colloquial compounding of epithets, as if to avoid saying common things in a common way."⁵⁸

October 30, 1815, in reply to these objections Hunt sent forth this defense: "we accomodate ourselves to certain habitual, sophisticated phrases of *written* language, and thus take away from real feeling of any sort the only language *it ever actually uses*, which is the *spoken* language." At the same time he made a few alterations at Byron's suggestion.⁵⁹ And again the latter wrote: "You have two excellent points in that poem—originality and Italianism."⁶⁰ After the *Story of Rimini* appeared he wrote to Moore: "Leigh Hunt's poem is a devilish good one—quaint, here and there, but with the substratum of

Or moon, if that her hunting be begun.
He who knows these delights, and too is prone
To moralize upon a smile or tear,
Will find at once religion of his own,
A bower for his spirit, and will steer
To alleys where the fir-tree drops its cone,
Where robins hop, and fallen leaves are seer.

(*Complete Works of John Keats*, ed by Forman, II, p. 183.)

⁵⁷ Lowell said of Hunt: "No man has ever understood the delicacies and luxuries of the language better than he."

⁵⁸ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, III, p. 226, October 22, 1815.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, III, p. 418.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, III, p. 242, October 30, 1815.

originality, and with poetry about it that will stand the test."⁶¹ In 1818 Byron's opinion had changed somewhat:

"When I saw *Rimini* in Ms., I told him I deemed it good poetry at bottom, disfigured only by a strange style. His answer was, that his style was a system, or *upon system*, or some other such cant; and when a man talks of system, his case is hopeless; so I said no more to him, and very little to anyone else. He believed his trash of vulgar phrases tortured into compound barbarisms to be *old English*⁶² . . . Hunt, who had powers to make the *Story of Rimini* as perfect as a fable of Dryden, has thought fit to sacrifice his genius to some unintelligible notion of Wordsworth, which I defy him to explain.⁶³ . . . A friend of mine calls 'Rimini' *Nimini Pinini*; and 'Foliage' *Follyage*. Perhaps he had a tumble in 'climbing trees in the Hesperides'! But Rimini has a great deal of merit. There never were so many fine things spoiled as in 'Rimini.'"⁶⁴

Hunt had a distinct theory of language based on a few crude principles. As his practical application of them had its effect upon Keats, a somewhat full consideration of them is desirable here. The first and most conspicuous one, promoted by what Hunt called "an idiomatic spirit in verse,"⁶⁵ was a preference for colloquial words.⁶⁶ He mistook for grace and fluency of diction, a turn of phrase that was without poetic connection and often in very poor taste. In dialogue, particularly, the effect is undignified. This professed doctrine was a fuller development⁶⁷ of the statement in the Advertise-

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, III, p. 267, February 29, 1816.

⁶² *Ibid.*, IV, p. 237, June 1, 1818. ⁶³ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 486-487.

⁶⁴ Medwin, *Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron*, p. 187.

⁶⁵ In the preface to the *Story of Rimini* (London, 1819, p. 16), Hunt says that a poet should use an actual existing language, and quotes as authorities, Chaucer, Ariosto, Pulci, even Homer and Shakespeare. He thought simplicity of language of greater importance even than free versification in order to avoid the cant of art: "The proper language of poetry is in fact nothing different from that of real life, and depends for its dignity upon the strength and sentiment of what it speaks, omitting mere vulgarisms and fugitive phrases which are cant of ordinary discourse."

⁶⁶ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, III, p. 418.

⁶⁷ Mr. A. T. Kent in the *Fortnightly Review* (vol. 36, p. 227), points out that Leigh Hunt in the preface to the *Story of Rimini*, avoided the mistake of Wordsworth in "looking to an unlettered peasantry for poetical language," and quotes him as saying that one should "add a musical modulation to what a fine understanding might naturally utter in the midst of its griefs and enjoyments." Kent says we have here "two vital points on which Wordsworth, in his capacity of critic, had failed to insist."

ment to the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798: in Hunt's opinion, Wordsworth failed to consider duly meter in its essential relations to poetry, and while Hunt himself desired a "return to nature and a natural style" he thought that Wordsworth had substituted puerility for simplicity and affectation for nature. Hunt's acknowledged model for the poem was Dryden,⁶⁸ but Hunt's colloquial phrasing, peculiar diction, elision,⁶⁹ and loose expansion approach much more closely to Chamberlayne's *Pharronida* (1689) than to anything in Dryden.^{69a} The following extract is one of many that might be cited as suggestive of Hunt's *Story of Rimini*:

"To his cold clammy lips
Joining her balmy twins, she from them sips
So much of death's oppressing dews, that, by
That touch revived, his soul, though winged to fly
Her ruined seat, takes time to breathe
These sad notes forth: "farewell, my dear, beneath
My fainting spirits sink."⁷⁰

Occasionally Hunt's choice of colloquial words fitted the subject, as in the *Feast of the Poets*, where humor and satire permit such expressions as "bards of Old England had all been rung in," "twiddling a sunbeam," "bloated his wits," "tricksy tenuity" or such words as "smack," "pop-in" and "sing-song." His poetical epistles suffer without injury such departures from dignified diction, but in other cases, of which the *Story of Rimini* is a notable example, a grave subject in the garb of everyday language is degraded into the incongruous and prosaic. It is in physical descriptions that this undignified diction most strikingly violates good taste. Examples are:

"And both their cheeks, like peaches on a tree,
Leaned with a touch together, thrillingly."

"So lightsomely dropped in, his lordly back,
His thigh so fitted for the tilt or dance."

⁶⁸ *Autobiography*, II, p. 24.

⁶⁹ To be found chiefly in the *Feast of the Poets*.

^{69a} In 1855, in *Stories in Verse*, Hunt changed his acknowledged allegiance from Dryden to Chaucer.

⁷⁰ Canto, II, ll. 433-440.

Sometimes the prosaic quality of Hunt's diction is due to its being pitched upon a merely "society" level:

"May I come in? said he:—it made her start,—
That smiling voice;—she coloured, pressed her heart
A moment, as for breath and then with free
And usual tone said, 'O Yes,—certainly.'"

Such a treatment of the meeting of Paolo and Francesca in the bower is wholly inadequate to the situation and the emotion of the moment. Additional illustrations of his colloquialisms from the *Story of Rimini* and from other poems of the same period are: "to bless his shabby eyes," "that to the stander near looks awfully," "banquet small, and cheerful, and considerate," "clipsome waist," "jauntiness behind and strength before" (description of a horse), "lend their streaming tails to the fond air," "sweepy shape," "cored in our complacencies," "lumps of flowers," "smooth, down-arching thigh," "tapering with tremulous mass internally."

Hunt's second principle to be considered is the excessive use of vague and passionless words. Instances of such words to be found very frequently in his poetry are: fond, amiable, fair, rural, cordial, cheerful, gentle, calm, smooth, serene, earnest, lovely, balmy, dainty, mild, meek, tender, kind, elegant, quiet, sweet, fresh, pleasant, warm, social, and many others of like character.

A third principle was the employment of unusual words; examples are found in the *Story of Rimini* in the first edition and in other poems produced about this same time. In the *Poetical Works*, 1832, most of them have been discarded. The preface states that the "occasional quaintnesses and neologisms" which "formerly disfigured the poems did not arise from affectation but from the sheer license of animal spirits"; that they are not worth defending and that he has left only two in the *Story of Rimini*, "swirl" and "cored." "Swaling" had been the most famous one in the poem because of the ridicule heaped upon it by the enemies of the Cockney School.

To use ordinary words in an extraordinary sense was a fourth principle. The effect was often extremely awkward.

Core passes as a synonym for heart; fry occurs in *Rimini* in a strange sense; lip and tiptoe are employed with a special Huntian significance. Nouns and adjectives are used as verbs and verbs as nouns and adjectives with an unpoetical effect: cored (verb); drag (noun); frets (noun); feel (noun); patting (adjective); spanning (adjective); lull'd (adjective); smearings; measuring; doings.⁷¹

The use of compounds is a fifth distinguishing feature. Such combinations are found as bathing-air, house-warm lips, side-long pillowed meekness, fore-thoughted chess, pin-drop silence, tear-dipped feeling.

The sixth and last peculiarity is the preference for adjectives in *y* and *ing*, many of them of his own coinage; for adverbs in *ly*; and for unauthorized or awkward comparatives: examples are plumpy (cheeks), knify, perky, sweepy, farmy, bosomy, pillowy, arrowy, liny, leafy, scattery, winy, globy; hasting, silvering, doling, blubbing, firming, thickening, quickening, differing, perking; lightsomely, refreshfully, thrillingly, kneadingly, lumpishly, smilingly, preparingly, crushingly;⁷² finelier, martialler, tastefuller, apter.

The colloquial vocabulary, the familiar tone, and the expansion of thought into phrases and clauses where it would have gained by condensed expression, give to the *Story of Rimini* a prosaic and eccentric style. Yet Hunt declared he held in horror eccentricity and prosiness.⁷³

In a discussion of the influence of Leigh Hunt upon the versification of his contemporaries and successors it is necessary to consider not only his theory but also the active part played by him as a conscious reviver of the older heroic couplet. In this reaction against the school of Pope, as also in the use of blank verse, he showed great independence in discarding approved models. The notes added to the *Feast of the Poets* in 1814, when it was republished from the *Reflector* of

⁷¹ E. De Selincourt gives these three last as examples of Hunt's derivation of the abstract noun from the present participle (*Poems of John Keats*, p. 577).

⁷² De Selincourt notes that these adverbs are usually formed from present participles. (*Poems of John Keats*, p. 577.)

⁷³ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, III, p. 418.

1812, are important in this connection. They show a wide familiarity with modern poetry. He writes:

"The late Dr. Darwin, whose notion of poetical music, in common with that of Goldsmith and others, was of the school of Pope, though his taste was otherwise different, was perhaps the first, who by carrying it to the extreme pitch of sameness, and ringing it affectedly in one's ears, gave the public at large a suspicion that there was something wrong in its nature. But of those who saw its deficiencies, part had the ambition without the taste or attention requisite for striking into a better path, and became eccentric in another extreme; while others, who saw the folly of both, were content to keep the beaten track and set a proper example to neither. By these appeals, however, the public ear has been excited to expect something better; and perhaps there was never a more favourable time than the present for an attempt to bring back the real harmonies of the English heroic, and to restore it to half the true principle of its music, variety. I am not here joining the cry of those, who affect to consider Pope as no poet at all. He is, I confess, in my judgment, at a good distance from Dryden, and at an immeasurable one from such men as Spenser and Milton; but if the author of the *Rape of the Lock*, of *Eloisa to Abelard*, and of the *Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady*, is no poet, then are fancy and feeling no properties belonging to poetry. I am only considering his versification; and upon that point I do not hesitate to say, that I regard him, not only as no master of his art, but as a very indifferent practiser, and one whose reputation will grow less and less, in proportion as the lovers of poetry become intimate with his great predecessors, and with the principles of musical beauty in general."⁷⁴

The remarks on Pope close with the hope that the imitation of the best work of Dryden, Milton and Spenser "might lead the poets of the present age to that proper mixture of sweetness and strength—of modern finish and ancient variety—from which Pope and his rhyming facilities have so long withheld us."⁷⁵ Hunt closes with an appeal for the return to Italian models, and says that Hayley, in his *Triumphs of*

⁷⁴ "For ever since Pope spoiled the ears of the town
With his cuckoo-song verses, half up and half down,
There has been such a doling and sameness,—by Jove,
I'd as soon have gone down to see Kemble in love."

(*Feast of the Poets.*)

Hunt calls Pope's translation of the moonlight picture from *Homer* "a gorgeous misrepresentation" (*Ibid.*, p. 35) and the whole translation "that elegant mistake of his in two volumes octavo." (*Foliage*, p. 32.)

⁷⁵ *Feast of the Poets*, p. 38. The same opinions are expressed in *The Examiner* of June 1, 1817; in the preface to *Foliage*, 1818.

Temper was "the quickest of our late writers to point out the great superiority of the Italian school over the French." He protests against the wide influence of Boileau.⁷⁶

The Introduction to the *Poetical Works* of 1832 contains a concise and technical statement of Hunt's theory of the heroic couplet. He argues that the triplet tends to condensation, three lines instead of four; that it carries onward the fervor of the poet's feeling, delivering him from the ordinary laws of his verse, and that it expresses continuity. Of the bracket he says: "I confess I like the very bracket that marks out the triplet to the reader's eye, and prepares him for the music of it. It has a look like the bridge of a lute."⁷⁷ The use of the Alexandrine in the heroic couplet, he avers, gives variety and energy. Double rhymes are defended on historical grounds. For himself he claims credit as a restorer, not an innovator, and prophesies that the perfection of the heroic couplet is "to come about by a blending between the inharmonious freedom of our old poets in general . . . and the regularity of Dryden himself. . . . If anyone could unite the vigor of Dryden with the ready and easy variety of pause in the works of the late Mr. Crabbe, and the lovely poetic consciousness in the *Lamia* of Keats . . . he would be a perfect master of the rhyming couplet." A study of the heroic couplet from Dryden to Shelley based on two hundred lines from each poet has yielded the results indicated in the table on the following page.

Professor Saintsbury says: "There is no doubt that his [Hunt's] versification in *Rimini* (which may be described as Chaucerian in basis with a strong admixture of Dryden, further crossed and dashed slightly with the peculiar music of the followers of Spenser, especially Browne and Wither) had a very strong influence both on Keats and on Shelley, and that it drew from them music much better than itself. This fluent, musical, many-colored-verse was a capital medium for tale telling."⁷⁸ Professor Herford marks it as the "starting point of that free or Chaucerian treatment of the heroic couplet and

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷⁷ P. 23.

⁷⁸ Saintsbury, *Essays in English Literature, 1780-1860*, p. 220.

	Dryden, <i>Absalom & Achitophel</i> , 1682.	Wm. Chamberlayne, <i>Pharonida</i> , 1689.	Alexander Pope, <i>Dunciad</i> , 1727.	Leigh Hunt ⁷⁹ <i>Story of Rimini</i> , 1816.	John Keats, <i>I stood tip-toe</i> , 1817.	Keats, <i>Sleep and Poetry</i> , 1817.	Keats, <i>Endymion</i> , 1818.	Keats ⁸⁰ <i>Lamia</i> , 1820.	Shelley, <i>Julian & Maddalo</i> , 1819.
Run-on Couplets.	4	61	1	3	23	47	54	20	45
Run-on Lines.....	16	71	12	26	41	48	44	35	52
Triplets	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	5	4
Alexandrines.....	3	0	1	2	0	0	3	12	0

of the colloquial style, eschewing epigram and full of familiar turns, which Shelley in *Julian and Maddalo*, and Keats in *Lamia*, made classical,"⁸¹ Mr. R. B. Johnson calls it "a protest against the polished couplet of Pope—a protest already expressed to some extent in the *Lyrical Ballads*, but through Hunt's influence, guiding the pens of Keats, Shelley and some of his noblest successors."⁸² Mr. A. J. Kent says that "No one-sided sentiment of reaction against our so-called Augustan literature disqualified Leigh Hunt from becoming, as he afterwards became, the greatest master since the days of Dryden of the heroic couplet."⁸³ Leigh Hunt's greatest mistake in the handling of the couplet has been clearly pointed out by Mr. Colvin, who says that he "blended the grave and the colloquial cadences of Dryden, without his characteristic nerve and energy in either."⁸⁴ The late Dr. Garnett said that the ease

⁷⁹ Hunt, *Story of Rimini*, London, 1818, p. 11, 200 lines beginning with top of page. In the 1742 lines of the poem, there are 47 run-on couplets and 260 run-on lines. There are 7 Alexandrines and 21 triplets. In the edition of 1832 the number of triplets has been increased to 26. There are 46 double rhymes. In a study of the cæsura based on the first 200 lines there are 70 medial, 17 double cæsuras. The remaining 113 lines have irregular or double cæsura.

⁸⁰ Keats, *Lamia*, Bk. I, ll. 1-200. In the 708 lines of *Lamia*, there are 98 run-on couplets, 144 run-on lines, 39 Alexandrines and 11 triplets. The cæsura is handled with greater freedom than in the *Story of Rimini*.

⁸¹ C. H. Herford, *Age of Wordsworth*, p. 83.

⁸² R. B. Johnson, *Leigh Hunt*, p. 94.

⁸³ *Leigh Hunt as a Poet*, *Fortnightly Review*, XXXVI: 226.

⁸⁴ Sidney Colvin, *Keats*, p. 30.

and variety of Dryden was restored by Hunt to English literature.⁸⁵ Monkhouse pointed out that Keats and Shelley, more than Hunt, reaped the rewards of his revivification of the heroic couplet. The diffuseness of the diction of the *Story of Rimini* results in a movement weaker than Dryden's and less buoyant than Chaucer's. Yet the verse is distinguished by a fluency and grace and melody that at times are very pleasing. It had a notable influence on English verse—an influence begun by others but strongly reinforced by Hunt. Further treatment of the influence of Hunt's diction and versification upon Keats and Shelley is reserved for chapters II and III of the present study.

Hunt's next poetical work after *Rimini* was *Foliage*, published in 1818. It is a collection of original poems under the title *Greenwoods*, and of translations under the title *Evergreens*.⁸⁶ In the preface Hunt announces the main features to be a love of sociability, of the country, and of the "fine imagination of the Greeks."⁸⁷ The first predilection runs the gamut from "sociability" to "domestic interest" and is the most fundamental characteristic of the author and of his writing. In the preface to *One Hundred Romances of Real Life* he declares sociability to be "the greatest of all interests." It rarely failed to crop out when he was writing even on the gravest and most impersonal of subjects. In his intercourse with strangers, this same "sociability," added to a natural kindness and sympathy, caused a familiarity of bearing that was often misunderstood. The *Nymphs*, the longest poem of the volume, is founded on Greek mythology and is interesting in connection with Keats's poems on classical subjects. Shelley said that the *Nymphs* was "truly *poetical*, in the intense and emphatic sense of the word. If 600 miles were not between us, I should say what pity that *glib* was not omitted, and that the poem is not so faultless as it is beautiful."⁸⁸ In general Shelley overestimated Hunt's poetry, though he saw some of its affectations. Shorter pieces were epistles to Byron, Moore, Hazlitt and Lamb—a kind of verse in which Hunt excelled, for his attitude and style

⁸⁵ Garnett, *Age of Dryden*, p. 32.

⁸⁶ From Homer, Theocritus, Bion, Moschus, Anacreon, and Catullus.

⁸⁷ p. 13.

⁸⁸ Hunt, *Correspondence*, I, p. 115.

were peculiarly adapted to the familiar tone permissible in such writing. Among Hunt's best poems may be counted the sonnets to Shelley, Keats, Haydon, Raphael, and Kosciusko; those entitled the *Grasshopper and the Cricket*, *To the Nile*, *On a Lock of Milton's Hair*, and the series on Hampstead. The suburban charms of Hampstead were very dear to Hunt and he never tired of celebrating them in poetry and in prose. No amount of derision from the *Quarterly* or *Blackwood's* stopped him. The general characteristics of *Foliage* are much the same as those of the *Story of Rimini*. There are poor lines and good ones, never sustained power, and no poetry of a very high order. The subjects themselves are often unpoetical. Hunt obtrudes himself too frequently in a breezy, offhand manner. Byron's opinion of the book was scathing:

"Of all the ineffable Centaurs that were ever begotten by self-love upon a Nightmare, I think 'this monstrous Sagittary' the most prodigious. He (Leigh H.) is an honest charlatan, who has persuaded himself into a belief of his own impostures, and talks Punch in pure simplicity of heart, taking himself (as poor Fitzgerald said of himself in the *Morning Post*) for Vates in both senses and nonsenses of the word. Did you [Moore] look at the translations of his own which he prefers to Pope and Cowper, and says so?—Did you read his skimble-skamble about Wordsworth being at the head of his own *profession*, in the *eyes* of those who followed it? I thought that poetry was an *art*, or an *attribute*, and not a *profession*; but be it one, is that . . . at the head of *your* profession in your eyes?"⁸⁹

Other poems belonging to this period are *Hero and Leander* and *Bacchus and Ariadne* in 1819, and a translation of Tasso's *Aminta* in 1820. The first two show Hunt's faculty for poetical narrative and description, and, in common with Keats, a partiality for classical subjects. The three are in no way radically different from the poems already considered.

The *Literary Pocket Book* which Hunt edited in 1820, 1821 and 1822, the *New Monthly Magazine* to which he began contributing in 1821, and the *Literary Examiner*, which he established in 1823, complete the enumeration of his writings during the period of his association with Byron, Shelley and Keats. Beyond the contributions of Shelley and Keats to the first and the reviews of Byron's poems in the third, they are unimportant here.

⁸⁹ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, IV, p. 238.

CHAPTER II

Keats's meeting with Hunt—Growth of their friendship—Haydon's intervention—Keats's residence with Hunt—His departure for Italy--Hunt's Criticism of Keats's poetry—His influence on the *Poems of 1817*.

It was about the year 1815 that Keats showed to his former school friend, Charles Cowden Clarke, the following sonnet, the first indication the latter had that Keats had written poetry :

“ What though, for showing truth to flatter'd state,
Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he,
In his immortal spirit been as free
As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.
Minion of grandeur ! think you he did wait ?
Think you he nought but prison walls did see,
Till, so unwilling thou unturn'dst the key ?
Ah, no ! far happier, nobler was his fate !
In Spenser's halls he stray'd, and bowers fair,
Culling enchanted flowers ; and he flew
With daring Milton through the fields of air :
To regions of his own his genius true
Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair
When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew ? ”

This admiration, expressed before Keats had met Hunt, was due to the influence of the Clarke family and to Keats's acquaintance with *The Examiner*, which he saw regularly during his school days at Enfield and which he continued to borrow from Clarke during his medical apprenticeship. Clarke later showed to Leigh Hunt two or three of Keats's poems. Of the reception of one of them (*How Many Bards Gild the Lapses of Time*) Clarke said :

“ I could not but anticipate that Hunt would speak encouragingly, and indeed approvingly, of the compositions—written, too, by a youth under age ; but my partial spirit was not prepared for the unhesitating and prompt admiration which broke forth before he had read twenty lines of the first poem.”¹

¹ Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke, *Recollections of Writers*, p. 132.

Hunt invited Keats to visit him. Of this first meeting between the two men, Clarke wrote:

"That was a red letter day in the young poet's life, and one which will never fade with me while memory lasts. The character and expression of Keats's features would arrest even the casual passenger in the street; and now they were wrought to a tone of animation that I could not but watch with interest, knowing what was in store for him from the bland encouragement, and Spartan deference in attention, with fascinating conversational eloquence, that he was to encounter and receive. . . . The interview, which stretched into three 'morning calls', was the prelude to many after-scenes and saunterings about Caen Wood and its neighborhood; for Keats was suddenly made a familiar of the household, and was always welcomed."²

Hunt's account of the meeting is as follows:

"I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the exuberant specimens of genuine though young poetry that were laid before me, and the promise of which was seconded by the fine fervid countenance of the writer. We became intimate on the spot, and I found the young poet's heart as warm as his imagination. We read and we walked together, and used to write verse of an evening upon a given subject. No imaginative pleasure was left untouched by us, or unenjoyed; from the recollections of the bards and patriots of old, to the luxury of a summer rain at our window, or the clicking of the coal in the winter-time. Not long afterwards, having the pleasure of entertaining at dinner Mr. Godwin, Mr. Hazlitt, and Mr. Basil Montagu, I showed the verses of my young friend, and they were pronounced to be as extraordinary as I thought them."³

Leigh Hunt discovered Keats, by no means a small thing, for as he himself has said: "To admire and comment upon the genius that two or three hundred years have applauded, and to discover what will partake of applause two or three hundred years hence, are processes of a very different description."⁴ With the same power of prophetic discernment, writing in 1828, he realized to the full the greatness of Keats and predicted that growth of his fame in the future which has since taken place.⁵ Keats's account of his reception is given in the sonnet *Keen fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there*:

² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³ Hunt, *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries; with Recollections of the Author's Life and of his Visit to Italy*, p. 247.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 246-272.

“ For I am brimfull of the friendliness
 That in a little cottage I have found;
 Of fair hair'd Milton's eloquent distress,
 And all his love for gentle Lycid drown'd;
 Of lovely Laura in her light green dress,
 And faithful Petrarch gloriously crowned.”

The date of the introduction of Keats to Hunt has been placed variously from November, 1815, to the end of the year 1816. He says:

“ It was not at Hampstead that I first saw Keats. It was in York Buildings, in the New Road (No. 8), where I wrote part of the *Indicator*—and he resided with me while in Mortimer Terrace, Kentish Town (No. 13), where I concluded it. I mention this for the curious in such things, among whom I am one.”⁶

If this statement were correct, it would make the meeting about two or three years later than has generally been supposed, for Leigh Hunt did not move to York Buildings until 1818, and he did not begin work on the *Indicator* until October, 1819. Clarke states positively that the meeting took place at Hampstead. From this evidence Mr. Colvin has suggested the early spring of 1816 as the most probable date.⁷ What seems better evidence than any that has yet been brought forward is a passage in *The Examiner* of June 1, 1817, in Hunt's review of Keats's *Poems* of 1817, where he says that the poet is a personal friend whom he announced to the public a short time ago (this allusion can only be to an article in *The Examiner* of December 1, 1816) and that the friendship dates from “no greater distance of time than the announcement above mentioned. We had published one of his sonnets in our paper,⁸ without knowing more of him than of any other anonymous correspondent; but at the period in question a friend brought us one morning some copies in verse, which he said were from the pen of a youth. . . . We had not read more than a dozen lines when we recognized a young poet indeed.” This seems

⁶ *Autobiography*, II, pp. 27, 59.

⁷ Colvin, *Keats*, p. 222.

⁸ This refers to Keats's first published poem, the sonnet *O Solitude, if I must with thee dwell*, published (without comment) in *The Examiner* of May 5, 1816.

conclusive evidence that the meeting did not take place until the winter of 1816, for Hunt's testimony written in 1817, when the circumstance was fresh in his mind is certainly more trustworthy than his impression of it at the time that he revised his *Autobiography* in 1859 at the age of seventy-five years.

The two men, before they came in contact, had much in common, and Hunt's influence, while in some cases an inspiring force, more often fostered instincts already existing in Keats. Both possessed by nature a deep love of poetry, color and melody, and both "were given to 'luxuriating' somewhat voluptuously over the 'deliciousness' of the beautiful in art, books or nature."⁹ At the very beginning of their acquaintance, notwithstanding a disparity in age of eleven years, they were wonderfully drawn to each other. Spenser was their favorite poet. Both had a great love for Chaucer, for Oriental fable and for Chivalric romance, and an unusual knowledge of Greek myth. But even at the height of their intimacy, the friendship seems to have remained more intellectual than personal, a fact due no doubt to Keats's reserve and Hunt's "incuriousness."¹⁰ Except for this drawback Hunt considered the friendship ideal. He says: "Mr. Keats and I were old friends of the old stamp, between whom there was no such thing as obligation, except the pleasure of it. He enjoyed the privilege of greatness with all whom he knew, rendering it delightful to be obliged by him, and an equal, but not a greater delight, to oblige. It was a pleasure to his friends to have him in their houses, and he did not grudge it."¹¹

Through Hunt, Keats was introduced to a circle of literary men whose companionship was an important factor in his development, notably Haydon, Godwin, Hazlitt, Shelley, Vincent Novello, Horace Smith, Cornelius Webbe, Basil Montagu, the Olliers, Barry Cornwall, and later Wordsworth.

For about a year following the meeting of the two, Hunt undoubtedly exerted the strongest influence of any living man over the young poet. Severn said that Keats's introduction to

⁹ Colvin, *Keats*, p. 34.

¹⁰ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 257.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 257-258.

Hunt wrought a great change in him and "intoxicated him with an excess of enthusiasm which kept by him four or five years."¹² Mr. Forman says that "Charles Cowden Clarke, as his early mentor, Leigh Hunt and Haydon as his most powerful encouragers at the important epoch of adolescence, must be credited with much of the active influence that took Keats out of the path to a medical practitioner's life, and set his feet in the devious paths of literature."¹³ Keats's interest in his profession had decreased as his knowledge and love of poetry grew. With the publication of his *Poems* in 1817, and his retirement in April of that year from London to the Isle of Wight "to be alone and improve himself and to continue *Endymion*, his decision was finally made in favor of a literary life. Hunt's aid at this time took the practical form of publishing Keats's poems in *The Examiner* and of drawing the attention of the public to them by comments and reviews. Whether he ever paid Keats for any of his contributions to his periodicals is not known."¹⁴ Through the influence of Hunt the Ollier brothers were induced to undertake the publication of Keats's first volume of poems. It is dedicated to Leigh Hunt in the sonnet *Glory and loveliness have passed away*. The sestet refers directly to him:

But there are left delights as high as these,
And I shall ever bless my destiny,
That in a time, when under pleasant trees
Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free
A leafy luxury, seeing I could please
With these poor offerings, a man like thee."¹⁵

Hunt replied in the sonnet *To John Keats*, quoted here in full because of its inaccessibility:

" 'Tis well you think me truly one of those,
Whose sense discerns the loveliness of things;
For surely as I feel the bird that sings
Behind the leaves, or dawn as it up grows,

¹² Sharp, *Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, p. 163.

¹³ *Works*, I, p. 30.

¹⁴ Mr. Forman, after a systematic search has been able to find no proof in either direction. (*Works*, III, p. 8.)

¹⁵ *Works*, I, p. 5.

Or the rich bee rejoicing as he goes,
 Or the glad issue of emerging springs,
 Or overhead the glide of a dove's wings,
 Or turf, or trees, or midst of all, repose.
 And surely as I feel things lovelier still,
 The human look, and the harmonious form
 Containing woman, and the smile in ill,
 And such a heart as Charles's wise and warm,—
 As surely as all this, I see ev'n now,
 Young Keats, a flowering laurel on your brow."¹⁶

In 1820, Hunt dedicated his translation of Tasso's *Aminta* to Keats.

In spite of a eulogistic article by Hunt running in *The Examiners* of June 1, July 6 and 13, 1817, and other notices in some of the provincial papers, the *Poems* sold not very well at first, and later, not at all.¹⁷ Praise from the editor of *The Examiner*, although offered with the kindest intentions in the world, was about the worst thing that could possibly have happened to Keats, for, politically and poetically, Leigh Hunt was most unpopular at this time;¹⁸ and it was noised abroad that Keats too was a radical in politics and in religion, a disciple of the apostate in his attack on the established and accepted creed of poetry. As a matter of fact, Keats's interest in politics decreased as his knowledge of poetry increased, although, "as a party-badge and sign of ultra-liberalism," he, like Hunt, Byron and Shelley continued to wear the soft turn-down collars in contrast to the stiff collars and enormous cravats of the time.¹⁹ In religion Keats vented his dislike of sect and creed on the Kirk of Scotland, as Hunt had on the Methodists. His "simply-sensuous Beauty-worship" Palgrave attributes to the "moral laxity" of Hunt.²⁰ Unless Palgrave, like Haydon, refers to Hunt's unorthodoxy in matters of church and state, it is difficult to understand on what evidence

¹⁶ *Foliage*, p. 125.

¹⁷ Colvin, *Keats*, p. 66.

¹⁸ A further account of the disastrous effects of his partisanship will be found in the discussion of the Cockney School, Ch. V.

¹⁹ *The Century Magazine*, XXIII, p. 706.

²⁰ Palgrave, *Poetical Works of John Keats*, p. 269.

he bases this statement; in the first place, a charge of moral laxity is not borne out by the recorded facts of Hunt's life, but only by such untrustworthy tradition as still lingers in the public mind from the Cockney School articles of *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly*. Carlyle said that he was of "most exemplary private deportment."²¹ Byron, Shelley and Lamb testified to his virtuous life. In the second place, a close comparison of the works of the two now leads one to conclude that "simply-sensuous Beauty-worship" existed to a much higher degree in Keats than in Hunt, and that so strong an innate tendency would have developed without outward stimulus from any one. While both men sought the good and worshipped the beautiful, Keats, unlike Hunt, recognized somewhat "the burthen and the mystery" of human life.

Keats, during his stay in the Isle of Wight and a visit to Oxford with Bailey in the spring and summer of 1817, worked on *Endymion*, finishing it in the fall. The letters exchanged between him and Hunt during his absence were friendly, but a feeling of coolness began before his return. In a letter from Margate May 10, 1817, there is a curiously obscure reference to the *Nymphs*:

"How have you got on among them? How are the *Nymphs*? I suppose they have led you a fine dance. Where are you now?—in Judea, Cappadocia, or the parts of Lybia about Cyrene? Stranger from 'Heaven, Hues, and Prototypes' I wager you have given several new turns to the old saying, 'Now the maid was fair and pleasant to look on,' as well as made a little variation in 'Once upon a time.' Perhaps, too, you have rather varied, 'Here endeth the first lesson.' Thus I hope you have made a horseshoe business of 'unsuperfluous life,' 'faint bowers' and fibrous roots."²²

A letter written by Haydon to Keats, dated May 11, 1817, warned Keats against Hunt, and, with others of its kind, was possibly the insidious beginning of the coolness which followed: "Beware, for God's sake of the delusions and sophistications that are ripping up the talents and morality of our friend! He will go out of the world the victim of his own weakness and the dupe of his own self-delusions, with the contempt of his

²¹ *Autobiography*, II, p. 266.

²² *Works*, IV, p. 16.

enemies and the sorrow of his friends, and the cause he undertook to support injured by his own neglect of character.”²³ A

²³ Haydon and Hunt had originally been very intimate, as is shown by the letters written by the former from Paris during 1814, and by his attentions to Hunt in Surrey Gaol. A letter to Wilkie, dated October 27, 1816, gives an attractive portrait of Hunt, and from this evidence it is inferred that the change in Haydon's attitude came about in the early part of 1817, and that a small unpleasantness was allowed by him to outweigh a friendship of long standing. After two weeks spent with Hunt he had written of him as “one of the most delightful companions. Full of poetry and art, and amiable humour, we argue always with full hearts on everything but religion and Bonaparte. . . . Though Leigh Hunt is not deep in knowledge, moral metaphysical or classical, yet he is intense in feeling and has an intellect forever on the alert. He is like one of those instruments on three legs, which, throw it how you will, always pitches on two, and has a spike sticking for ever up and ever ready for you. He “sets” at a subject with a scent like a pointer. He is a remarkable man, and created a sensation by his independence, his disinterestedness in public matters; and by the truth, acuteness and taste of his dramatic criticisms, he raised the rank of newspapers, and gave by his example a literary feeling to the weekly ones more especially. As a poet, I think him full of the genuine feeling. His third canto in *Rimini* is equal to anything in any language of that sweet sort. Perhaps in his wishing to avoid the monotony of the Pope school, he may have shot into the other extreme; and his invention of obscene [sic] words to express obscene feelings borders sometimes on affectation. But these are trifles compared with the beauty of the poem, the intense painting of the scenery, and the deep burning in of the passion which trembles in every line. Thus far as a critic, an editor and a poet. As a man I know none with such an affectionate heart, if never opposed in his opinions. He has defects of course: one of his great defects is getting inferior people about him to listen, too fond of shining at any expense in society, and love of approbation from the darling sex bordering on weakness; though to women he is delightfully pleasant, yet they seem more to handle him as a delicate plant. I don't know if they do not put a confidence in him which to me would be mortifying. He is a man of sensibility tinged with morbidity and of such sensitive organization of body that the plant is not more alive to touch than he. . . . He is a composition, as we all are, of defects and delightful qualities, indolently averse to worldly exertion, because it harasses the musings of his fancy, existing only by the common duties of life, yet ignorant of them, and often suffering from their neglect.” (Haydon, *Life Letters and Table Talk*, ed. R. H. Stoddard, pp. 155-156.)

Haydon said that the rupture came about because Hunt insisted upon speaking of our Lord and his Apostles in a condescending manner,

letter in reply from Keats, written the day after he wrote the passage about the *Nymphs*, accounts for its dissembling tone:

"I wrote to Hunt yesterday—scarcely know what I said in it. I could not talk about Poetry in the way I should have liked for I was not in humour with either his or mine. His self delusions are very lamentable—they have inticed him into a Situation which I should be less eager after than that of a galley Slave,—what you observe thereon is very true must be in time [sic].

Perhaps it is a self delusion to say so—but I think I could not be deceived in the manner that Hunt is—may I die to-morrow if I am to be. There is no greater Sin after the seven deadly than to flatter oneself into the idea of being a great Poet. . . ."²⁴

To judge from the testimony of his brother George it is not surprising that Keats succumbed to Haydon's influence against Hunt: "his nervous, morbid temperament led him to misconstrue the motives of his best friends."²⁵ In the last days of his life, his suspicion and bitterness were general. In a letter to Bailey, June, 1818, Keats says: "I have suspected everybody."²⁶ January, 1820, he wrote Georgiana Keats, "Upon the whole I dislike mankind."²⁷ Haydon may have sincerely believed Hunt's influence to be injurious because of the latter's unorthodoxy in matters of religion. He wrote that Keats "could not bring his mind to bear on one object, and was at the mercy of every petty theory that Leigh Hunt's ingenuity would suggest. . . . He had a tendency to religion when I first knew him, but Leigh Hunt soon forced it from his mind. . . . Leigh Hunt was the unhinger of his best dispositions. Latterly, Keats saw Leigh Hunt's weaknesses. I distrusted his leader, but Keats would not cease to visit him, because he thought Hunt ill-used. This

and that he rebelled against Hunt's "audacious romancing over the Biblical conceptions of the Almighty." (Haydon, *Life Letters and Table Talk*, p. 65.) This view, in the light of Haydon's general unreliability, may be mere romancing; for Keats, writing on January 13, 1818, gave the following explanation of the quarrel: "Mrs. H. (Hunt) was in the habit of borrowing silver from Haydon—the last time she did so, Haydon asked her to return it at a certain time—she did not—Haydon sent for it—Hunt went to expostulate on the indelicacy, etc.—they got to words and parted for ever." (Keats, *Works*, IV, p. 58).

²⁴ *Works*, IV, p. 20.

²⁵ Milnes, *Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats*, II, p. 44.

²⁶ *Works*, IV, p. 114.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, V, p. 142.

shows Keats's goodness of heart."²⁸ It is not to be regretted that Haydon lessened Keats's estimate of Hunt's literary infallibility, for his influence was most injurious in that direction; but it is to be regretted that he impugned a friendship in which Hunt was certainly sincere and by which Keats had benefited.

In September, just before Keats's return, he seems somewhat mollified and writes to John Hamilton Reynolds of Leigh Hunt's pleasant companionship; he has failings, "but then his make-ups are very good."²⁹

On his return to Hampstead in October, 1817, Keats found affairs among the circle in a very bad way.³⁰

Everybody "seems at Loggerheads—There's Hunt infatuated—there's Haydon's picture in statu quo—There's Hunt walks up and down his painting room—criticising every head most unmercifully. There's Horace Smith tired of Hunt. 'The web of our life is of mingled yarn.' . . . I am quite disgusted with literary men and will never know another except Wordsworth—no not even Byron. Here is an instance of the friendship of such. Haydon and Hunt have known each other many years . . . Haydon says to me, Keats, don't show your lines to Hunt on any Account or he will have done half for you—so it appears Hunt wishes it to be thought. When he met Reynolds in the Theatre, John told him that I was getting on to the completion of 4,000 lines—Ah! says Hunt, had it not been for me they would have been 7,000! If he will say this to Reynolds, what would he to other people? Haydon received a Letter a little while back on this subject from some Lady—which contains a caution to me, thro' him, on the subject—now is not all this a most paultry (sic) thing to think about?"³¹

Hunt had tried to persuade Keats not to write a long poem. Keats wrote of this: "Hunt's dissuasion was of no avail"³²—I refused to visit Shelley that I might have my own unfettered scope; and after all, I shall have the reputation of Hunt's élève. His corrections and amputations will by the knowing ones be traced in the poem."³³

During 1818, Leigh Hunt in his critical work remained silent concerning Keats, probably because of his sincere disapproval of *Endymion* and secondly, because he realized that his

²⁸ *Life, Letters and Table Talk*, p. 208.

²⁹ *Works*, IV, p. 31.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 60.

³¹ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 37–38.

³² *Ibid.*, IV, p. 38, Keats gives his argument in favor of a long poem.

³³ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 38.

praise would be injurious. The attacks on Hunt in *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* had foreshadowed an attack of the same virulent kind on Keats. The realization came with the publication of *Endymion*. The article on "Johnny Keats," fourth of the series on the Cockney School in *Blackwood's Magazine*, appeared almost simultaneously with his return from Scotland, and the one in the *Quarterly* in September of the same year. These will be discussed in a later chapter. Suspicions of neglect on the part of Hunt murmured in Keats's mind like a discordant undertone, although the friendship continued as warm as ever on Hunt's part. Keats was passive, without, however, the old sense of dependence and trust. December 28, 1817, he writes to his brothers of the "driveling egotism" of *The Examiner* article on the obsolescence of Christmas gambols and pastimes.³⁴ In a journal letter written to George Keats and his wife in Louisville during December and January, 1819, the old liking has become almost repugnance: "Hunt keeps on in his old way—I am completely tired of it all. He has lately published a Pocket Book called the literary Pocket-Book—full of the most sickening stuff you can imagine";³⁵ yet Keats suffered himself to become a contributor to this same book with two sonnets, *The Human Seasons* and *To Ailsa Rock*. Again in the same letter:

"The night we went to Novello's there was a complete set-to of Mozart and punning. I was so completely tired of it that if I were to follow my own inclinations I should never meet any of that set again, not even Hunt who is certainly a pleasant fellow in the main when you are with him, but in reality he is vain, egotistical, and disgusting in matters of taste and morals. He understands many a beautiful thing; but then, instead of giving other minds credit for the same degree of perception as he himself possesses,—he begins an explanation in such a curious manner that our taste and self-love is offended continually. Hunt does one harm by making fine things petty and beautiful things hateful. Through him I am indifferent to Mozart, I care not for white Busts—and many a glorious thing when associated with him becomes a nothing."³⁶

Continuing in the same strain:

"I will have no more Wordsworth or Hunt in particular. Why should we be of the tribe of Manasseh when we can wander with Esau? Why should

³⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 49.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 193.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 195-196.

we kick against the Pricks, when we can walk on Roses? . . . I don't mean to deny Wordsworth's grandeur and Hunt's merit, but I mean to say that we need not to be teased with grandeur and merit, when we can have them uncontaminated and unobtrusive. Let us have the old Poets and Robin Hood."³⁷

And again:

"Hunt has damned Hampstead and masks and sonnets and Italian tales. Wordsworth has damned the lakes—Milman has damned the old drama—West has damned wholesale. Peacock has damned satire—Ollier has damned Music—Hazlitt has damned the bigoted and the blue-stockinged; how durst the Man?! "³⁸

A parody on the conversation of Hunt's set, in which he is the principal actor, carries with it a ridicule that is unkindlier than the bitterness of dislike, and difficult to reconcile with the fact that Keats at the same time preserved the semblance of friendship.³⁹

"Scene, a little Parlour—Enter Hunt—Gattie—Hazlitt—Mrs. Novello—Ollier. *Gattie*:—Ha! Hunt got into your new house? Ha! Mrs. Novello: seen Altam and his wife? *Mrs. N.*: Yes (with a grin) it's Mr. Hunt's isn't it? *Gattie*: Hunt's? no, ha! Mr. Ollier, I congratulate you upon the highest compliment I ever heard paid to the Book. Mr. Hazlitt, I hope you are well. *Hazlitt*:—Yes Sir, no Sir—*Mr. Hunt* (at the Music) 'La Biondina' etc. Hazlitt, did you ever hear this?—"La Biondina" &c. *Hazlitt*: O no Sir—I never—*Ollier*:—Do Hunt give it us over again—divine—*Gattie*:—divino—Hunt when does your Pocket-Book come out—*Hunt*:—"What is this absorbs me quite?" O we are spinning on a little, we shall floridize soon I hope. Such a thing was very much wanting—people think of nothing but money getting—now for me I am rather inclined to the liberal side of things. I am reckoned lax in my Christian principles, etc., etc., etc., etc."⁴⁰

Such a dual attitude in Keats can be explained only by a dual feeling in his mind, for it is impossible to believe him capable of deliberate deceit. He may have realized Hunt's affectation and superficiality and "disgusting taste"; he was probably swayed by Haydon to distrust Hunt's morals; the suspicions planted by Haydon concerning *Endymion* rankled; but at the same time Hunt's charm of personality, and the assistance and encouragement given in the first days of their

³⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 12.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 90.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 34.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 198.

friendship, formed a bond difficult to break. Of Leigh Hunt's attitude there can be no doubt, for through his long life of more than threescore years and ten, filled with many friendships of many kinds, he can in no instance be charged with insincerity. There is no conclusive proof on record to show him deserving of the insinuations which Keats believed in respect to *Endymion*, for Haydon is not trustworthy, and the opinion of a lady given through Haydon may be dismissed on the same grounds.⁴¹ Reynolds' testimony is not damaging in itself, and in the absence of facts to the contrary may have been wrongly construed by Keats. To the charges against himself, Leigh Hunt has replied in the following passage, "affecting and persuasive in its unrestrained pathos of remonstrance":⁴²

"an irritable morbidity appears even to have driven his suspicions to excess; and this not only with regard to the acquaintance whom he might reasonably suppose to have had some advantages over him, but to myself, who had none; for I learned the other day, with extreme pain, such as I am sure so kind and reflecting a man as Mr. Monckton Milnes would not have inflicted on me could he have foreseen it, that Keats at one period of his intercourse suspected Shelley and myself of a wish to see him undervalued! Such are the tricks which constant infelicity can play with the most noble natures. For Shelley, let *Adonais* answer. For myself, let every word answer which I uttered about him, living and dead, and such as I now proceed to repeat. I might as well have been told that I wished to see the flowers or the stars undervalued, or my own heart that loved him."⁴³

Hunt's feeling towards Keats is nowhere better expressed than in his *Autobiography*: "I could not love him as deeply as I did Shelley. That was impossible. But my affection was only second to the one which I entertained for that heart of hearts."⁴⁴

Keats's atonement is contained in the last letter that he ever wrote: "If I recover, I will do all in my power to correct the

⁴¹ Haydon attempted also to make trouble between Wordsworth and Hunt, by telling the former that Hunt's admiration for him was only a "weather cock estimation" and by insinuations concerning his sincerity in friendships. (Haydon, *Life, Letters and Table Talk*, p. 197.)

⁴² J. Ashcroft Noble, *The Sonnet in England, and Other Essays*, p. 108.

⁴³ *Autobiography*, II, p. 42.

⁴⁴ *Autobiography*, II, p. 44.

mistakes made during sickness, and if I should not, all my faults will be forgiven."⁴⁵

Haydon's influence over Keats was at its height in 1817 and 1818.⁴⁶ His gifts and his enthusiasm, his "fresh magnificence"⁴⁷ carried Keats by storm. It was not until about July 1818 that a reaction against Haydon in favor of Hunt set in, brought about by money transactions between Keats and Haydon, and the indifference of the latter in repaying a debt when he knew Keats's necessity.⁴⁸ Keats probably never ceased to feel that Hunt's influence as a poet had been injurious, as indeed it was, but the relative stability of his two friends adjusted itself after this experience with Haydon. Affairs seem to have been smoothed over with Hunt, and were not disturbed again until a short time before Keats's departure for Italy, when his morbid suspicions, which even led him to accuse his friend Brown of flirting with Fanny Brawne,⁴⁹ seem to have been renewed.

In 1820, Brown, with whom Keats had been living since his brother Tom's death, went on a second tour to Scotland. Keats, unable to accompany him, took a lodging in Wesleyan Place, Kentish Town, to be near Hunt, who was living in Mortimer Street. Brown says: "It was his choice, during my absence to lodge at Kentish Town, that he might be near his friend, Leigh Hunt, in whose companionship he was ever happy."⁵⁰ In a letter to Fanny Brawne, Keats said Hunt "amuses me very kindly."⁵¹ It is not likely, judging from this overture, that there had ever been an actual cessation of intercourse, notwithstanding what Keats wrote in his letters; and the act points to a revival of the old feeling on his part. About the twenty-second or twenty-third of June, 1820, Keats left

⁴⁵ *Works*, V, p. 203.

⁴⁶ Keats wrote Haydon, "There are three things to rejoice at in this age "The Excursion, Your Pictures, and Hazlitt's depth of taste." (*Works*, IV, p. 56.)

⁴⁷ *Works*, II, p. 187.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, V, p. 116.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, V, p. 180.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, V, p. 175.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, V, p. 174.

his rooms and moved to Leigh Hunt's home to be nursed.⁵² He remained about seven weeks with the family, when there occurred an unfortunate incident which resulted in his abrupt departure August 12, 1820. A letter of Fanny Brawne's was delivered to him two days late with the seal broken. The contretemps was due to the misconduct of a servant, but it was interpreted by Keats as treachery on the part of the family. At the moment he would accept no explanations or apologies. He writes of this incident to Fanny Brawne:

"My friends have behaved well to me in every instance but one, and there they have become tattlers, and inquisitors into my conduct: spying upon a secret I would rather die than share it with anybody's confidence. For this I cannot wish them well, I care not to see any of them again. If I am the Theme, I will not be the Friend of idle Gossips. Good gods what a shame it is our Loves should be put into the microscope of a Coterie. Their laughs should not affect you (I may perhaps give you reasons some day for these laughs, for I suspect a few people to hate me well enough, *for reasons I know of*, who have pretended a great friendship for me) when in competition with one, who if he should never see you again would make you the Saint of his memory. These Laughers, who do not like you, who envy you for your Beauty, who would have God-bless'd me from you for ever: who were plying me with disencouragements with respect to you eternally. People are revengeful—do not mind them—do nothing but love me."⁵³

In his next letter to her he says:

"I shall never be able to endure any more the society of any of those who used to meet at Elm Cottage and Wentworth Place. The last two years taste like brass upon my Palate."⁵⁴

The lack of self-control and the distrust seen in these extracts show that Keats was laboring under hallucinations produced by an ill mind and body; the letters from which they have been taken are unnatural, almost terrible, in their passion and rebellion against fate.

⁵² That he needed better attention than he could receive in lodgings is seen from an account of Keats's condition given in *Maria Gisborne's Journal* (*Ibid.*, V, p. 182), which says that when she drank tea there in July, Keats was under sentence of death from Dr. Lamb: "he never spoke and looks emaciated."

⁵³ *Works*, V, p. 183-184. The quotation follows Keats's punctuation.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, V, p. 185.

Keats moved to the residence of the Brawnes. While he was here the trouble seems to have been smoothed over, for in a letter to Hunt he says: "You will be glad to hear I am going to delay a little at Mrs. Brawne's. I hope to see you whenever you get time, for I feel really attached to you for your many sympathies with me, and patience at all my *lunes*. . . . Your affectionate friend, John Keats."⁵⁵ To Brown he says: "Hunt has behaved very kindly to me"; and again: "The seal-breaking business is over-blown. I think no more of it."⁵⁶ Hunt's reply is couched in most affectionate terms:

"Giovani [sic] Mio,

I shall see you this afternoon, and most probably every day. You judge rightly when you think I shall be glad at your putting up awhile where you are, instead of that solitary place. There are humanities in the house; and if wisdom loves to live with children round her knees (the tax-gatherer apart), sick wisdom, I think, should love to live with arms about it's waist. I need not say how you gratify me by the impulse that led you to write a particular sentence in your letter, for you must have seen by this time how much I am attached to yourself.

"I am indicating at as dull a rate as a battered finger-post in wet weather. Not that I am ill: for I am very well altogether. Your affectionate Friend, Leigh Hunt."⁵⁷

This was probably the last letter written by him to Keats. In September Keats went to Rome with Severn to escape the hardships of the winter climate, after having declined an invitation from Shelley to visit him at Pisa. In the same month, Hunt published an affectionate farewell to him in *The Indicator*. An announcement of his death appeared in *The Examiner* of March 25, 1821. The story of the personal relations of the two men could not be better closed than with the words of Hunt written March 8, 1821, to Severn in Rome when he believed Keats still alive:

"If he can bear to hear of us, pray tell him; but he knows it already, and can put it into better language than any man. I hear that he does not like to be told that he may get better; nor is it to be wondered at, considering his firm persuasion that he shall not survive. He can only regard it as a puerile thing, and an insinuation that he shall die. But if his persuasion should happen to be no longer so strong, or if he can now put up

⁵⁵ *Cornhill Magazine*, 1892.

⁵⁶ *Works*, V, p. 194.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, V, p. 193.

with attempts to console him, tell him of what I have said a thousand times, and what I still (upon my honour) think always, that I have seen too many instances of recovery from apparently desperate cases of consumption not to be in hope to the very last. If he still cannot bear to hear this, tell him—tell that great poet and noblehearted man—that we shall all bear his memory in the most precious part of our hearts, and that the world shall bow their heads to it, as our loves do. Or if this, again, will trouble his spirit, tell him that we shall never cease to remember and love him; and that, Christian or infidel, the most sceptical of us has faith enough in the high things that nature puts into our heads, to think all who are of one accord in mind and heart are journeying to one and the same place, and shall unite somewhere or other again, face to face, mutually conscious, mutually delighted.”⁵⁸

The literary relations of Keats and Hunt will be considered under two heads; first, the criticism of Keats’s writings by Hunt; and second, his direct influence upon them.

On first looking into Chapman’s Homer in *The Examiner* of December 1st, 1816, was embodied in an article entitled “Young Poets.” It was the first notice of Keats to appear in print and is in part as follows:

“The last of these young aspirants whom we have met with, and who promise to help the new school to revive Nature and

‘To put a spirit of youth in everthing,’—

is we believe, the youngest of them all, and just of age. His name is John Keats. He has not yet published anything except in a newspaper, but a set of his manuscripts was handed us the other day, and fairly surprised us with the truth of their ambition, and ardent grappling with Nature.”

In *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*, the last line of the same sonnet—

“Silent upon a peak in Darien”—

is called “a basis of gigantic tranquillity.”⁵⁹

Leigh Hunt’s review of the *Poems* of 1817⁶⁰ was kind and discriminating. He writes characteristically of the first poem, *I stood tiptoe*, that it “consists of a piece of luxury in a rural spot”; of the epistles and sonnets, that they “contain strong evidences of warm and social feelings.” This comment is quite

⁵⁸ *Correspondence*, I, p. 107.

⁵⁹ P. 248.

⁶⁰ *The Examiner*, June 1st, July 6th, and 13th, 1817.

characteristic of Hunt. He was as fond of finding "warm and social feelings" in the poetry of others as of putting them into his own. In his anxiety he sometimes found them when they did not exist. He continues: "The best poem is certainly the last and the longest, entitled *Sleep and Poetry*. It originated in sleeping in a room adorned with busts and pictures [Hunt's library], and is a striking specimen of the restlessness of the young poetical appetite, obtaining its food by the very desire of it, and glancing for fit subjects of creation 'from earth to heaven.' Nor do we like it the less for an impatient, and as it may be thought by some irreverend [sic] assault upon the late French school of criticism⁶¹ and monotony." But Hunt did not allow his affection for Keats or his approval of Keats's poetical doctrine to blunt his critical acumen. In summarizing he says: "The very faults of Mr. Keats arise from a passion for beauties, and a young impatience to vindicate them; and as we have mentioned these, we shall refer to them at once. They may be comprised in two;—first, a tendency to notice everything too indiscriminately, and without an eye to natural proportion and effect; and second, a sense of the proper variety of versification without a due consideration of its principles." In conclusion, the beauties "outnumber the faults a hundred fold" and "they are of a nature decidedly opposed to what is false and inharmonious. Their characteristics indeed are a fine ear, a fancy and imagination at will, and an intense feeling of external beauty in its most natural and least inexpressible simplicity."

Hunt was disappointed with *Endymion* and did not hesitate to say so. Keats writes to his brothers:

"Leigh Hunt I showed my 1st book to—he allows it not much merit as a whole; says it is unnatural and made ten objections to it in the mere skimming over. He says the conversation is unnatural and too high-flown for Brother and Sister—says it should be simple, forgetting do ye mind that they are both overshadowed by a supernatural Power, and of force could not speak like Francesca in the *Rimini*. He must first prove that Caliban's poetry is unnatural. This with me completely overturns his objections. The fact is he and Shelley are hurt, and perhaps justly, at my not having showed them the affair officiously (sic); and from several hints I

⁶¹ Lines 181–206.

have had they appear much disposed to dissect and anatomize any trip or slip I may have made.—But who's afraid? Aye! Tom! Demme if I am."⁶²

Leigh Hunt expressed himself thus in 1828: "*Endymion*, it must be allowed was not a little calculated to perplex the critics. It was a wilderness of sweets, but it was truly a wilderness ; a domain of young, luxuriant, uncompromising poetry."⁶³

La Belle Dame sans Merci, which appeared first in *The Indicator*,⁶⁴ was accompanied with an introduction by Hunt, who says that it was suggested by Alain Chartier's poem of the same title and "that the union of the imagination and the real is very striking throughout, particularly in the dream. The wild gentleness of the rest of the thoughts and of the music are alike old, and they are alike young." *The Indicator* of August 2 and 9, 1820, contained a review of the volume of 1820. The part dealing with philosophy in poetry is of more than passing interest:

"We wish that for the purpose of his story he had not appeared to give in to the commonplace of supposing that Apollonius's sophistry must always prevail, and that modern experiment has done a deadly thing to poetry by discovering the nature of the rainbow, the air, etc.; that is to say, that the knowledge of natural science and physics, by showing us the nature of things, does away the imaginations that once adorned them. This is a condescension to a learned vulgarism, which so excellent a poet as Mr. Keats ought not to have made. The world will always have fine poetry, so long as it has events, passions, affections, and a philosophy that sees deeper than this philosophy. There will be a poetry of the heart, as long as there are tears and smiles: there will be a poetry of the imagination, as long as the first causes of things remain a mystery. A man who is no poet, may think he is none, as soon as he finds out the first causes of the rainbow; but he need not alarm himself:—he was none before."⁶⁵

Much the same line of discussion is reported of the conversation at Haydon's "immortal dinner," December 28, 1817, when Keats and Lamb denounced Sir Isaac Newton and his demolition of the things of the imagination, Keats saying he

⁶² *Works*, IV, p. 64.

⁶³ *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*, p. 257.

⁶⁴ May 10, 1820.

⁶⁵ Cf. with Poe's sonnet, *Science, true daughter of Old Time thou art*.

"destroyed the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to a prism."⁶⁶ The pictorial features of the *Eve of St. Agnes* were particularly admired by Hunt, as one might be led to expect from the decorative detail of his own narrative poetry. The portrait of "Agnes" (*sic* for Madeline) is said to be "remarkable for its union of extreme richness and good taste" and "affords a striking specimen of the sudden and strong maturity of the author's genius. When he wrote *Endymion* he could not have resisted doing too much. To the description before me, it would be a great injury either to add or to diminish. It falls at once gorgeously and delicately upon us, like the colours of the painted glass." Of the description of the casement window, Hunt asks "Could all the pomp and graces of aristocracy with Titian's and Raphael's aid to boot, go beyond the rich religion of this picture, with its 'twilight saints' and its 'scutcheons blushing with the blood of queens'?" Elsewhere he says that "Persian Kings would have filled a poet's mouth with gold" for such poetry. Hunt calls *Hyperion*⁶⁷ "a fragment, a gigantic one, like a ruin in the desert, or the bones of the mastodon. It is truly of a piece with its subject, which is the downfall of the elder gods." Later, in *Imagination and Fancy*, Hunt declared that Keats's greatest poetry is to be found in *Hyperion*. His opinion of the whole is thus summed up:

"Mr. Keats's versification sometimes reminds us of Milton in his blank verse, and sometimes of Chapman both in his blank verse and in his rhyme; but his faculties, essentially speaking, though partaking of the unearthly aspirations and abstract yearnings of both these poets, are altogether his own. They are ambitious, but less directly so. They are more *social*, and in the finer sense of the word, sensual, than either. They are more coloured by the modern philosophy of sympathy and natural justice. *Endymion*, with all its extraordinary powers, partook of the faults of youth, though the best ones; but the reader of *Hyperion* and these other stories

⁶⁶ Haydon, *Life, Letters and Table Talk*, p. 201.

⁶⁷ In connection with *Hyperion*, it is interesting to note that the manuscript in Keats's handwriting recently discovered, survived through the agency of Leigh Hunt. From him it passed into the ownership of his son Thornton, and later to the sister of Dr. George Bird. It has been purchased from her by the British Museum. (*Athenæum*, March 11, 1905.)

would never guess that they were written at twenty.⁶⁸ The author's versification is now perfected, the exuberances of his imagination restrained, and a calm power, the surest and loftiest of all power, takes place of the impatient workings of the younger god within him. The character of his genius is that of energy and voluptuousness, each able at will to take leave of the other, and possessing in their union, a high feeling of humanity not common to the best authors who can combine them. Mr. Keats undoubtedly takes his seat with the oldest and best of our living poets."⁶⁹

The more important division of the literary relations of the two men is the direct influence of Hunt's work upon that of Keats.

On Keats's prose style Hunt's influence was very slight and can be quickly dismissed. At one time Keats, affected perhaps by Hunt's example, thought of becoming a theatrical critic. He did actually contribute four articles to *The Champion*. Keats's favorite of Hunt's essays, *A Now*, contains several passages composed by Keats. Mr. Forman considers that "the greater part of the paper is so much in the taste and humor of Keats" that he is justified in including it in his edition of Keats. He has also called attention to a passage in Keats's letter to Haydon of April 10, 1818, which bears a striking likeness to Hunt's occasional essay style: "The Hedges by this time are beginning to leaf—Cats are becoming more vociferous—Young Ladies who wear Watches are always looking at them. Women about forty-five think the Season very backward."

The *Poems* of 1817 show Hunt's influences in spirit, diction and versification. There are epistles and sonnets in the manner of Hunt. *I stood tiptoe upon a little hill* opens the volume with a motto from the *Story of Rimini*. The *Specimen of an Induction* and *Calidore* so nearly approach Hunt's work in manner, that they might easily be mistaken for it. *Sleep and Poetry* attacks French models as Hunt had previously done. The colloquial style of certain passages is significant of Hunt's influence upon the poems. A few examples are:

⁶⁸ This is, of course, a mistake.

⁶⁹ For other criticism of the 1820 poems by Hunt, see *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*, pp. 258-268.

- "To peer about upon variety."⁷⁰
 "Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves
 Guess where the jaunty streams refresh themselves."⁷¹
 "The ripples seem right glad to reach those cresses."⁷²
 "... you just now are stooping
 To pick up the keepsake intended for me."⁷³
 "Of this fair world, and all its gentle livers."⁷⁴
 "The evening weather was so bright, and clear,
 That men of health were of unusual cheer."⁷⁵
 "Linger awhile upon some bending planks
 That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,
 And watch intently Nature's gentle doings:
 They will be found softer than the ring-dove's cooings."⁷⁶
 "The lamps that from the high roof'd wall were pendant
 And gave the steel a shining quite transcendent."⁷⁷
 "Or on the wavy grass outstretch'd supinely,
 Pry 'mong the stars, to strive to think divinely."⁷⁸

The following are infelicitous passages reflecting Leigh Hunt's bad taste, especially in the description of physical appearance, or of situations involving emotion:

- "... what amorous and fondling nips
 They gave each other's cheeks."⁷⁹
 "... some lady sweet
 Who cannot feel for cold her tender feet."⁸⁰
 "Rein in the swelling of his ample might."⁸¹
 "Nor will a bee buzz round two swelling peaches."⁸²
 "... What a kiss,
 What gentle squeeze he gave each lady's hand!
 How tremblingly their delicate ankles spann'd!
 Into how sweet a trance his soul was gone,
 While whisperings of affection
 Made him delay to let their tender feet
 Come to the earth; with an incline so sweet

⁷⁰ *I stood tiptoe*, l. 16.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, l. 20.

⁷² *Ibid.*, l. 81.

⁷³ *To some Ladies*, l. 15.

⁷⁴ *Calidore*, l. 132. Also pointed out by Mr. Colvin, *Keats*, p. 53.

⁷⁵ *To my brother George*, l. 7.

⁷⁶ *I stood tiptoe*, l. 144.

⁷⁷ Hunt quotes this with approbation, as showing a "human touch."
 (*Specimen of an Induction to a Poem*, ll. 13-14.)

⁷⁸ *Specimen of an Induction to a Poem*, l. 48.

⁷⁹ *Calidore*, l. 66.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, l. 117.

⁸¹ *I stood tiptoe*, l. 215.

⁸² *Ibid.*, l. 61.

From their low palfreys o'er his neck they bent :
 And whether there were tears of languishment,
 Or that the evening dew had pearl'd their tresses,
 He felt a moisture on his cheek and blesses
 With lips that tremble, and with glistening eye,
 All the soft luxury
 That nestled in his arms."⁸³
 " . . . Add too, the sweetness
 Of thy honey'd voice ; the neatness
 Of thine ankle, lightly turned :
 With those beauties, scarce discern'd
 Kept with such sweet privacy,
 That they seldom meet the eye
 Of the little loves that fly
 Round about with eager pry."⁸⁴

Descriptive passages in the Huntian style are not infrequent : the opening lines from the *Imitation of Spenser*⁸⁵ are much nearer to Hunt than to Spenser.

" Now morning from her orient chamber came,
 And her first footsteps touched a verdant hill,
 Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame,
 Silv'ring the untainted gushes of its rill ;
 Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distil
 And after parting beds of simple flowers,
 By many streams a little lake did fill,
 Which round its marge reflected woven bowers,
 And in its middle space, a sky that never lowers."⁸⁶

These lines of *Calidore* show a like resemblance :

" He bares his forehead to the cool blue sky,
 And smiles at the far clearness all around,
 Until his heart is well nigh over wound,
 And turns for calmness to the pleasant green
 Of easy slopes, and shadowy trees that lean

⁸³ *Ibid.*, l. 80 ff.

⁸⁴ *To . . .* l. 23 ff.

⁸⁵ Mr. De Selincourt in *Notes and Queries*, Feb. 4, 1905, dates the *Imitation of Spenser* "1813." He does not produce documentary evidence, however. The discovery of the hitherto unpublished poem, *Fill for me a brimming bowl*, in imitation of Milton's early poems, dated in the Woodhouse transcript Aug. 1814, is of considerable interest in determining the date of Keats's earliest composition of verse. A sonnet *On Peace* found in the same MS. is a second discovery of an unpublished poem of the same period.

⁸⁶ *Works*, I, p. 26.

So elegantly o'er the waters' brim
And show their blossoms trim."⁸⁷

A third is:

"Across the lawny fields, and pebbly water."

Single phrases showing the influence of Hunt⁸⁸ are: "airy feel," "patting the flowing hair," "A Man of elegance," "sweet-lipped ladies," "grateful the incense," "modest pride," "a sun-beamy tale of a wreath," "soft humanity," "leafy luxury," "pillowy silkiness," "swelling apples," "the very pleasant rout," "forms of elegance."

The following passages apparently bear as close a resemblance to each other as it is possible to find by the comparison of individual passages from the works of the two men:

"The sidelong view of swelling leafiness
Which the glad setting sun in gold doth dress"⁸⁹

compare with:

"And every hill, in passing one by one
Gleamed out with twinkles of the golden sun:
For leafy was the road, with tall array."⁹⁰

The *Epistles* are strikingly like Hunt's epistles in spirit, diction and metre. Mr. Colvin has pointed out that the one addressed *To George Felton Mathew* was written in November, 1815, before Keats had met Hunt and before the publication of the latter's epistles;⁹¹ but Keats may have known them at the time in manuscript through Clarke. The resemblances may also have been due, in part, as in other points of comparison, to an innate similarity of thought and feeling.

That Hunt's habit of sonneteering and his preference for the Petrarchan form influenced Keats, is attested by the similarity of the latter's sonnets to Hunt's in form, subjects, and

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, I. p. 16. Mr. W. T. Arnold, *Poetical Works of John Keats*, London, 1884, has remarked upon the similar use of *so* by Hunt and Keats. He compares the "so elegantly" of this passage with the line from *Rimini* "leaves so finely suit."

⁸⁸ *To Charles Cowden Clarke*, l. 88.

⁸⁹ *Calidore*, ll. 34-35.

⁹⁰ *Story of Rimini*, p. 35.

⁹¹ Colvin, *Keats*, p. 31.

allusions, and by the direct references⁹² to Hunt. *On the*

⁹² References to Hunt in the sonnets and other poems of 1817 are the following:

1. "He of the rose, the violet, the spring
The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake:"

(*Addressed to the Same* [Haydon].) This sonnet did not appear in 1817, although it belongs to this period.)

2. "... thy tender care
Thus startled unaware
Be jealous that the foot of other wight
Should madly follow that bright path of light
Trac'd by thy lov'd Libertas; he will speak,
And tell thee that my prayer is very meek
.
.
.
.
.
.
.
Him thou wilt hear."

(*Specimen of an Introduction*, l. 57 ff.) Mrs. Clarke is the authority that "Libertas" was Hunt.

3. "With him who elegantly chats, and talks—
The wrong'd Libertas."

(*Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke*, l. 43-44.)

4. "I turn full-hearted to the friendly aids
That smooth the path of honour; brotherhood,
And friendliness the nurse of mutual good.
*The hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet
Into the brain ere one can think upon it;*
The silence when some rhymes are coming out;
And when they're come, the very pleasant rout:
The message certain to be done tomorrow.
'Tis perhaps as well that it should be to borrow
Some precious book from out its snug retreat,
To cluster round it when we next shall meet."

(*Sleep and Poetry*.)

Lines 353-404 of the same, nearly one fifth of the entire poem, are a description of Hunt's library. Mr. De Selincourt calls it "a glowing tribute to the sympathetic friendship which Keats had enjoyed at the Hampstead Cottage and an attempt to express in the style of the *Story of Rimini* something of the spirit which had informed the *Lines Written Above Tintern Abbey*." (*Poems of John Keats*. Introduction p. 34.)

(a) Of this room Hunt wrote: "Keats's *Sleep and Poetry* is a description of a parlour that was mine, no bigger than an old mansion's closet." *Correspondence* I, p. 289. See also *Lord Byron and Some of his Contemporaries*, p. 249.

*Grasshopper and the Cricket*⁹³ and *To the Nile*⁹⁴ were written in contest with Hunt. *To Spenser* is a refusal to comply with Hunt's request that he should write a sonnet on Spenser.⁹⁵ The title of *On Leigh Hunt's Poem, The Story of Rimini*⁹⁶ speaks for itself.⁹⁷

To put it briefly, the *Poems* of 1817 show Hunt's influence in more ways than any equal number of the young poet's later verses. It is seen in Keats's subject matter⁹⁸ and allusions; in his adoption of a colloquial style and diction; in his absorption of Hunt's spirit in the treatment of nature and in his attitude toward women; and in his imitation and exaggerated use of

(b) Further description of the same room is to be found in *Shelley's Letter to Maria Gisborne*, ll. 212-217.

(c) Clarke refers to it in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, February, 1874, and in *Recollections of Writers*, p. 134. In the letter he says that a bed was made up in the library for Keats and that he was installed as a member of the household. Here he composed the framework of the poem. Lines 325-404 are "an inventory of the art garniture of the room."

(d) The most interesting record in regard to the room is that given by Mrs. J. T. Fields in a *Shelf of old Books*, who says that her husband saw the library treasures which had inspired Keats—Greek casts of Sappho, casts of Kosciusko and Alfred, with engravings, sketches and well-worn books. Among the books collected by Mr. Fields was a copy of Shelley, Coleridge and Keats bound together, with an autograph of all three men, formerly owned by Hunt. The fly leaf "at the back contained the sonnet written by Keats on the *Story of Rimini*."

⁹³ The two sonnets were published in *The Examiner* of September 21, 1817; Keats's had been included previously in the *Poems of 1817*; Hunt's appeared later in *Foliage*, 1818.

⁹⁴ This did not appear in 1817, but belongs to this period. See *Works*, II, p. 257. For a comparison of these two sonnets with Shelley's on the same Subject, see Rossetti's *Life of Keats*, p. 110.

⁹⁵ *Works*, II, p. 166.

⁹⁶ Compare with *A Dream, after Reading Dante's Episode of Paolo and Francesca*, 1819. (*Works*, III, p. 16.)

⁹⁷ A pocket-book given Keats by Hunt and containing many of the first drafts of the sonnets belonged to Charles Wentworth Dilke. It is still in the possession of the Dilke family.

⁹⁸ For instances of Keats's interest in politics, see *To Kosciusko*, *To Hope*, ll. 33-36, and scattered references to Wallace, William Tell and similar characters. Most of these references have already been called attention to by others.

the free heroic couplet in *Sleep and Poetry*, *I stood tiptoe*, *Specimen of an Induction* and other poems.

Of the poem *Lines on seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair*, written in January, 1818, Keats wrote in a letter to Bailey: "I was at Hunt's the other day, and he surprised me with a real authenticated lock of *Milton's hair*. I know you would like what I wrote thereon, so here it is—as they say of a Sheep in a Nursery Book . . . This I did at Hunt's, at his request—perhaps I should have done something better alone and at home."⁹⁹ Leigh Hunt's three sonnets on the same subject, published in *Foliage*, have been already spoken of in the preceding chapter.

Endymion shows a decided decrease in the ascendancy of Hunt's mind over Keats, for the sway of his intellectual supremacy had been shaken before suspicions arose in Keats's mind as to the disinterestedness of his motives. What influence lingers is seen in the general theory of versification and in the diction, with some trace in matters of taste. A marvellous luxury of imagery, glimpses into the heights and depths of nature, an absorbing love of Greek fable, a deeper infusion of the ideal have superseded what Mr. Colvin has called the "sentimental chirp" of Hunt.¹⁰⁰ Specific passages in *Endymion* reminiscent of Hunt are rare, but Book III, ll. 23-30 recalls the general descriptive style in the *Descent of Liberty* and summarizes in a few lines pages of Hunt's diffuse, spectacular imagery. Once or twice Keats seems to have fallen into the colloquial manner in dialogue:

"But a poor Naiad, I guess not. Farewell!
I have a ditty for my hollow cell."¹⁰¹

Again:

"I own
This may sound strangely: but when, dearest girl,
Thou seest it for my happiness, no pearl
Will trespass down those cheeks. Companion fair!
Wilt be content to dwell with her, to share
This sister's love with me? Like one resign'd
And bent by circumstance, and thereby blind

⁹⁹ *Works*, IV, pp. 60-61. The poem follows.

¹⁰⁰ Colvin, *Keats*, p. 107.

¹⁰¹ *Endymion*, Bk. II, ll. 129-130.

In self-commitment, thus that meek unknown:
 'Aye, but a buzzing by my ears has flown,
 Of jubilee to Dian:—truth I heard?
 Well then, I see there is no little bird.' ¹⁰²

Occasionally there are passages in the bad taste of Hunt, as this example:

"Enchantress! tell me by this soft embrace,
 By the most soft completion of thy face,
 Those lips, O slippery blisses, twinkling eyes,
 And by these tenderest, milky sovereignties—
 These tenderest, and by the nectar wine,
 The passion—" ¹⁰³

Likewise:

"O that I
 Were rippling round her dainty fairness now,
 Circling about her waist, and striving how
 To entice her to a dive! then stealing in
 Between her luscious lips and eyelids thin." ¹⁰⁴

In July, 1820, appeared the volume *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes and other Poems*. The lingering influence of Hunt is seen in a fondness for the short poetic tale, in the direct and simple narrative style, and in the return in *Lamia* to the use of the heroic couplet; but that, along with the other poems of the volume, is free from the Huntian eccentricities of manner and diction found in Keats's earlier works. He had come into his own. In treatment, *Lamia* is almost faultless in technique and in matters of taste; although Mr. Colvin has pointed out as an exception the first fifteen lines of the second book, which he says have Leigh Hunt's "affected ease and fireside triviality." ¹⁰⁵ One of the few occurrences of Hunt's manner is seen in the *Eve of St. Agnes*.

"Paining with eloquence her balmy side." ¹⁰⁶

The famous passage in the *Eve of St. Agnes* describing all manner of luscious edibles is very suggestive of one in Hunt's *Bacchus and Ariadne* which enumerates articles of the same

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, Bk. IV, l. 863 ff.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Bk. II, l. 756 ff.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Bk. II, l. 938 ff.

¹⁰⁵ *Keats*, p. 169.

¹⁰⁶ Stanza 23, l. 7.

kind.¹⁰⁷ It is in this latter poem and in the *Story of Rimini* that Hunt's power of description most nearly approximates to that of Keats. In 1831, in the *Gentle Armour*, Hunt is the imitator of Keats, as Mr. Colvin has already pointed out.¹⁰⁸

The peculiarities of Keats's diction are, in the main, two-fold, and may each be traced to a direct influence: first, archaisms in the manner of Spenser¹⁰⁹ and Chatterton; second, colloquialisms and deliberate departures from established usage in the employment and formation of words, in imitation of Leigh Hunt. Keats's theory so far as he had one, is set forth in a passage in one of his letters: "I shall never become attached to a foreign idiom, so as to put it into my writings. The *Paradise Lost*, though so fine in itself, is a corruption of our language. It should be kept as it is, unique, a curiosity, a beautiful and grand curocity, the most remarkable production of the world; a northern dialect accommodating itself to Greek and Latin inversions and intonations. The purest English, I think—or what ought to be the purest—is Chatterton's."¹¹⁰

Keats's *Poems* of 1817 show Hunt's influence in diction more strongly than any of his later works. In the majority of instances, this influence is reflected in the principles of usage rather than in the actual usages, although words and phrases used by Hunt are occasionally found in the writings of Keats. The tendency to a colloquial vocabulary is seen in such words and combinations as jaunty, right glad, balmy pain, leafy luxury,¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷*Hero and Leander* and *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1819, p. 45.

¹⁰⁸ Mr. W. T. Arnold makes the mistake of thinking that Keats imitated Hunt's *Gentle Armour*. Mr. Colvin corrects this statement. (*Keats, Poetical Works*, p. 59.)

¹⁰⁹ (a) W. T. Arnold, *Keats, Poetical Works*, p. 128. (b) J. Hoops, *Keats's Jugend und Jugendgedichte*, Englische Studien, XXI, 239. (c) W. A. Read, *Keats and Spenser*.

¹¹⁰*Works*, V, p. 121.

¹¹¹ This same expression occurs in *Hero and Leander*, 1819, in the phrase, "Half set in trees and leafy luxury." Keats's dedication sonnet in which it occurs was written in 1817. Therefore Mr. W. T. Arnold makes a mistake when he says (in his edition of Keats, p. 129) it was taken direct from Hunt's poem, although the two separate words are among his favorites and Keats probably took them from him and combined them.

delicious,¹¹² tasteful, gentle doings, gentle livers, soft floatings, frisky leaps, lawny mantle, patting, busy spirits. Among these words, leafy, balmy, lawny, patting, nest, tiptoe, and variations of "taste" were special favorites with Hunt. A few expressions only of this kind, as "nest," "honey feel," "infant's gums," are found in *Endymion*, and almost none at all in the later poems.

Keats used peculiar words with so much greater felicity and in so much greater profusion than Hunt, exceeding in richness and individuality of vocabulary most of the poets of his own time, that one is forced to believe that Spenser's influence rather than Hunt's was dominant here. Breaches of taste are confined almost entirely to the *Poems* of 1817.

Ordinary words used peculiarly include "nips" (they gave each other's cheeks), "core" (for heart) and "luxury"¹¹³ (with a wrong connotation), nouns and adjectives employed as verbs, and verbs as nouns and adjectives. These devices likewise cannot be credited to Hunt without reservation, since both Spenser and Milton used them; but there is little doubt that in this instance Hunt was an inciting and sustaining influence. Keats resorted to such artifices frequently and continued to do so to the end. Instances of nouns and adjectives employed as verbs are: pennanc'd, luting, passion'd, neighbour'd, syllabing, companion'd, labrynth, anguish'd, poesied, vineyard'd, woof'd, loaned, medicin'd, zon'd, mesh, pleasure, legion'd, companion, green'd, gordian'd, character'd, finn'd, forest'd, tusk'd, monitor. Verbs employed as nouns and adjectives are: shine, which occurs five times, feel, seeing, lush, pry and amaze.

¹¹² Mr. Arnold says "delicious" is used sixteen times by Keats. (Keats, *Poetical Works*, p. 129). He quotes a passage from one of Hunt's prefaces in which the latter comments on Chaucer's use of the word: "The word *deliciously* is a venture of animal spirits which in a modern writer some critics would pronounce to be too affected or too familiar; but the enjoyment, and even incidental appropriateness and relish of it, will be obvious to finer senses." In *Rimini* this line occurs: "Distils the next note more deliciously."

¹¹³ Palgrave, *Poetical Works of John Keats*, p. 261, notices Leigh Hunt's misuse of this word in his review of *I stood tiptoe*, quoted on p. 107. See his use of the same on p. 76. In *Bacchus and Ariadne* it occurs in this passage "all luxuries that come from odorous gardens."

More examples of coined compounds, nouns and adjectives, are to be found in Keats than in Hunt; in his better work as well as in his early productions. A few are: cirque-couchant, milder-mooned, tress-lifting, flitter-winged, silk-pillowed, death-neighing, break-covert, palsy-twitching, high-sorrowful, sea-foamy, amber-fretted, sweet-lipped, lush-leaved.

The last principle is the coining, or choice of, adjectives in *y* and *ing*; of adverbs in *ly*, when, in many instances, adjectives and adverbs already existed formed on the same stem. The frequent use of words with these weak endings gives a very diffuse effect at times in Keats's early poems. The following are examples: fenny, fledgy, rushy, lawny, liny, nervy, pipy, paly, palmy, towery, sluicy, surgy, scummy, mealy, sparry, heathy, rooty, slumberry, bowery, bloomy, boundly, palmy, surgy, spermy, ripply, spangly, spherey, orby, oozy, skeyey, clayey, and plashy.¹¹⁴ Adjectives in *ing* are: cheering, hushing, breeding, combing, dumpling, sphering, tenting, toying, baaing, far-spooming, peering (hand), searing (hand), shelving, serpentine. Adverbs are: scantly, elegantly, refreshingly, freshening (lave), hoveringly, greyly, cooingly, silverly, refreshfully, whitely, drowningly, wingedly, sighingly, windingly, bearingly.

These statements are not very conclusive proof of the frequent occurrences of the same words in the poems of the two men. They are questionable even in regard to the principles of usage themselves, since poets of the same period or young poets may possess the same tendencies. Yet in the light of their relations already discussed the similarity of a number of principles seems convincing proof that Hunt influenced Keats considerably in the *principles* of diction in his first volume and occasionally in the selection of individual words; and that Keats never entirely freed himself from some of Hunt's peculiarities. Shelley, in writing of *Hyperion* to Mrs. Hunt, spoke of the "bad sort of style which is becoming fashionable among those who fancy that they are imitating

¹¹⁴ This is used in *Hyperion*, II, l. 45. The expression "plashy pools" occurs in the *Story of Rimini*.

Hunt and Wordsworth.”¹¹⁵ Medwin reported Shelley as saying “We are certainly indebted to the Lakists for a more simple and natural phraseology; but the school that has sprung out of it, have spawned a set of words neither Chaucerian nor Spencerian (*sic*), words such as ‘gib,’ and ‘flush,’ ‘whiffling,’ ‘perking up,’ ‘swirling,’ ‘lightsome and brightsome’ and hundreds of others.”¹¹⁶

Keats, following the lead of Hunt, used the free heroic couplet in several of the 1817 poems with a license even greater than Hunt’s. In *Endymion* he indulged in further vagaries of rhythm and metre that Hunt never dreamed of and in fact greatly disapproved of. Hunt said that “*Endymion* had no versification.”¹¹⁷ In its want of couplet and line units, this is not very far from the truth. Writing of it again in 1828, he says: “The great fault of *Endymion* next to its unpruned luxuriance, (or before it, rather, for it was not a fault on the right side,) was the wilfulness of its rhymes. The author had a just contempt for the monotonous termination of everyday couplets; he broke up his lines in order to distribute the rhyme properly; but going only upon the ground of his contempt, and not having settled with himself any principles of versification, the very exuberance of his ideas led him to make use of the first rhymes that offered; so that, by a new meeting of effects, the extreme was artificial, and much more obtrusive than the one under the old system. Dryden modestly thought, that a rhyme had often helped him to a thought. Mr. Keats in the tyranny of his wealth, forced his rhymes to help him, whether they would or not; and they obeyed him, in the most singular manner, with equal promptitude and ungainliness.”¹¹⁸ *Endymion* has been thought by some critics, to have been written under the metrical influence of Chamberlayne’s *Pharronida*. In the number of run-on lines and couplets—a scheme nearer blank verse than the couplet—there is certainly a striking correspondence. Mr. Forman thinks that

¹¹⁵ November 11, 1820.

¹¹⁶ *Life of Percy Bysshe Shelly*, II, p. 36.

¹¹⁷ *Imagination and Fancy*, p. 231.

¹¹⁸ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, pp. 252–3.

Keats knew the poem. Mr. Colvin and Mr. De Selincourt can see no real likeness. There is no proof as yet discovered that Keats ever heard of it.

In *Lamia*, after the extreme reaction in *Endymion*, Keats approached nearer to the classic form of the couplet used by Dryden, but still with greater freedom in structure than appears in either Dryden or Hunt. From the evidence of Brown it is probable that Keats imitated Dryden directly and not through the medium of Hunt's work, but it is very likely that Hunt directed him there in the first instance for a model. Mr. Palgrave says of the metre of *Lamia* that Keats "admirably found and sustained the balance between a blank verse treatment of the 'Heroic' and the epigrammatic form carried to such perfection by Pope."¹¹⁹ Leigh Hunt said that "the lines seem to take pleasure in the progress of their own beauty like sea nymphs luxuriating through the water."¹²⁰

In conclusion, Keats's early and late employment of the couplet was marked always by greater freedom in the use of run-on couplets and lines, and in the handling of the cæsura than Dryden's or Hunt's; he was at first slower than Hunt to employ the triplet and the Alexandrine, but he later adopted them in a larger measure; and he introduced the run-on paragraph and the hemistich independently of Hunt.

¹¹⁹ Palgrave, *Poetical Works of John Keats*, p. 274.

¹²⁰ *Poetical Works*, 1832, p. 36.

CHAPTER III

SHELLEY

Finnerty Case—Correspondence of Hunt and Shelley—Their Political and Religious Sympathy—Hunt's Defense of Shelley—Hunt's Italian Journey—Shelley's Death—Hunt's Criticism—Literary Influence—Shelley's Estimate of Hunt.

The friendship of Shelley and Leigh Hunt is the simple story of an intimacy founded on a common endowment of independence of thought and of capacity for self-sacrifice. Although both were sensitive and shrinking by nature, and preferred to dwell in an isolated world of books and dreams, yet for the sake of abstract principles and for love of humanity, both expended much time and endured much pain in the arena of public strife.

In *The Examiners* of February 18 and 24, 1811, appeared articles by Hunt on the Finnerty case. Peter Finnerty, Hunt's successor as editor of *The Statesman*, had been prosecuted and imprisoned on the charge of libelling Lord Castlereagh. Hunt's defense drew Shelley's attention to the case and may have inspired him, it has been suggested, to write his *Political Essay on the Existing State of Things*. The proceeds went to Finnerty.¹ On March 2 Shelley subscribed to the Finnerty fund and, on the same day, wrote Hunt, whom he had never met, a letter from Oxford, congratulating him on his acquittal from a third charge of libel and proposing that an association should be formed to establish "rational liberty," to resist the enemies of justice, and to protect each other.²

¹ The poem is reported to have brought £100, more than any poem sold during his lifetime. It is now lost.

² Mac-Carthy, who has fully treated this incident, thinks that the account Hunt gave of the matter many years later is so incoherent as to indicate that he did not receive the letter until after he met Shelley, or perhaps not at all. He also points out that two passages in the letter to Hunt of March 2, 1811, important in their bearing upon Shelley's political theories

Shelley's political creed was, in the main, that of William Godwin, with an admixture of Holbach, Volney and Rousseau at first hand.³ In English philosophic literature he knew Berkeley, Hume, Reid and Locke. His watchword was the cry of the French Revolution, liberty, equality and fraternity, to be gained, not by violence and bloodshed, but by a steady and unyielding resistance of the masses against the corrupt institutions of church and state. Like Godwin, he believed man capable of his own redemption and, with tradition and tyranny overthrown and reason and nature enthroned, he hoped for universal justice and ultimate perfectibility of mankind. His poetry and his prose represent a development from the impassioned and imaginative enthusiasm of an uncompromising youth, who would single-handed revolutionize the world in the twinkling of an eye, to the saner hope of a man who took somewhat into account the necessarily gradual nature of ethical evolution. His chief fallacy lay in the failure to recognize evil as an inherent force in human nature and to acknowledge sect and state, to which he attributed the origin of all error, as inventions of man's ingenuity. Neither did he perceive the necessity of certain restrictions on the individual for the preservation of law and order. He believed in no distinctions of rank except those based on individual talent and virtue. He wrote in 1811: "I am no aristocrat, nor 'crat' at all, but vehemently long for the time when men may dare to live in accordance with Nature and Reason—in consequence with Virtue, to which I firmly believe that Religion and its establishments, Polity and its establishments, are the formidable though destructible barriers."⁴ Shelley knew of Leigh Hunt first as a political writer of considerable importance. In this respect he never ceased to admire him or to be influenced by *The Examiner* in the campaign against government corruption. Yet his own equipment of mind and training, visionary as his theories seem, gave him a power of speculation and grasp of situation

at this time, are identical with passages in a letter of February 22 of the same year, addressed to the editor of *The Statesman*, presumably Finnerty. (*Shelley's Early Life*, pp. 1-106.)

³ Hancock, *The French Revolution and English Poets*, pp. 50-77.

⁴ Letter to Miss Hitchener, June 25, 1811.

that ignored the limitations of time and space, while Hunt, with his narrower view, never got beyond the petty and immediate details of one nation or of one age.

The social improvements which Shelley advocated were Catholic Emancipation, brought about later, as has been pointed out by Symonds, by the very means which Shelley foresaw and prophesied; reform of parliamentary representation⁵ similar to that carried into effect in 1832, 1867 and 1882; freedom of the press⁶ and repeal of the union of Great Britain and Ireland; the abolition of capital punishment and of war.⁷ During the fourteen years of Hunt's editorship, among the reforms for which he fought in *The Examiner* were the first three of these measures. He denounced capital punishment and war in the same paper and later in his poem *Captain Sword and Captain Pen*.⁸

Shelley's moral code was based on an idealized sense of justice, and was a kind of "natural piety."⁹ With one marked exception, he seems to have been true to the pursuit of it, both in his standards of conduct and in his relations with others. His life was a model of generosity, purity of thought, and unselfish devotion. Hunt reported Shelley as having said: "What a divine religion might be found out, if charity were really the principle of it, instead of faith."¹⁰ He was atheist only in the sense of discarding the dogmas of theology and of superstition, and in his spirit of scientific inquiry. He did not deny the existence in nature of an all-pervading spirit. Hunt thought the popular misconception of Shelley's opinions was due to his misapplication of the names of the Deity and to his identification of them with vulgar superstitions. Of Shelley's attitude he wrote: "His want of faith in the letter, and his exceeding faith in the spirit of Christianity, formed a comment, the one on the other, very formidable to those who

⁵ G. B. Smith, *Shelley, A Critical Biography*, p. 88.

⁶ See the *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*.

⁷ Smith, *Shelley, A Critical Biography*, p. 110.

⁸ For Shelley's opinion on the coincidence of their political views, see the last paragraph of the dedication of *The Cenci*.

⁹ Hunt, *Autobiography*, II, p. 103.

¹⁰ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 176.

chose to forget what Scripture itself observes on that point."¹¹ Whether or not Shelly believed in immortality is still a vexed question and is likely to remain so, since he had not reached convictions sufficiently stable to permit a formal statement on his part. Many of the passages in *Adonais* would lead one to believe that he did; certainly he did, like Hunt, cling to the idea of the persistence, in some form or other, of the good and the beautiful. The close conformity of their views is seen in the latter's two sonnets in *Foliage*¹² addressed to Shelley, where the poet condemns the degrading notions so prevalent concerning the Deity and celebrates the Spirit of Beauty and Goodness in all things. But, in religion as in politics, Shelley was bolder and more speculative than Hunt.

The fine of £1,000 and imprisonment of the Hunt brothers in 1813 drew from Shelley a vehement protest. In a letter to Hogg¹³ he lamented the inadequacy of Lord Brougham's defense and fairly boiled with indignation at "the horrible injustice and tyranny of the sentence" and pronounced Hunt "a brave, a good, and an enlightened man." He started a subscription with twenty pounds, and later he must have offered to pay the entire fine, for Hunt recorded in his *Autobiography* that Shelley had made him "a princely offer,"¹⁴ which he declined, as he did not need it. The offer was actuated solely by a hatred of oppression, for the two men had little or no personal knowledge of each other at the time.

It is impossible to decide the exact date of their first meeting. Hunt says that it took place before the indictment for libel on the Prince Regent.¹⁵ This evidence would make it fall sometime between March, 1812, the date of Shelley's letter mentioned above, and February, 1813, the beginning of the incarceration. But a letter from Shelley to Hunt dated December 7, 1813, demanding if he had made the statement that Milton had died an atheist, from its very formal tone, leads one to believe that they had not met up to that time and that Hunt, writing from memory many years afterwards, made a

¹¹ *Autobiography*, II, p. 36.

¹² Pp. 122, 123.

¹³ December 27, 1812.

¹⁴ II, p. 13.

¹⁵ *Autobiography*, II, p. 27.

mistake. Thornton Hunt gives as the immediate cause of the two men coming together, Shelley's application to Mr. Rowland Hunter, the publisher and stepfather of Mrs. Hunt, for advice regarding the publication of a poem. He referred Shelley to Leigh Hunt. The next meeting was in Surrey Street Gaol. Thornton Hunt, in a delightful reminiscence of Shelley,¹⁶ says that he had no recollection of him among his father's visitors in prison, but he remembered perfectly the latter's description of his "angelic" appearance, his classic thoughts, and his dreams for the emancipation of mankind. The real intimacy began after Shelley's return from the continent in 1816 when Shelley, in search of a house before he settled at Marlow, was the guest of Hunt at Hampstead during a part of December.¹⁷ A close companionship followed uninterruptedly for two years until Shelley went to Italy, and there are recorded in the letters and journals of each many pleasant evenings at Hampstead and at Marlow, filled with poetry and music, with talks on art and trials of wit, with dinners and theater parties. Mary Shelley and Mrs. Hunt became as great friends as their husbands.

When Harriet committed suicide and Shelley went up to London to institute proceedings for possession of their children, Hunt remained constantly with him and gave him as much sympathy and support as it is possible for one fellow-being to extend to another whom all the world has deserted.¹⁸ He attended the Chancery suit and stated Shelley's position in

¹⁶ *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1863.

¹⁷ December 8, 1816, Shelley wrote to Hunt: "I have not in all my intercourse with mankind experienced sympathy and kindness with which I have been so affected, or which my whole being has so sprung forward to meet and to return. . . . With you, and perhaps some others (though in a less degree, I fear) my gentleness and sincerity find favour, because they are themselves gentle and sincere: they believe in self-devotion and generosity because they are themselves generous and self-devoted." (Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 328.)

¹⁸ December 15, 1816, Shelley wrote Mary Godwin: Hunt's "delicate and tender attentions to me, his kind speeches of you, have sustained me against the weight of the horror of this event." (Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, II, p. 68.)

The Examiner.¹⁹ This sympathy and support, given Shelley in his hour of greatest need and desolation, have never been sufficiently valued in a comparative estimate of the relative indebtedness of the two men. If Shelley gave freely of his money, Hunt, devoid of wordly goods, gave unstintingly, to the detriment of his reputation, of those things which money cannot purchase. That he incurred the displeasure of men in power, and ran the risk of being misunderstood by the public in befriending Shelley, did not deter him for an instant.

During 1817 Shelley made the acquaintance, through Hunt, of the Cockney circle, including Keats, Reynolds, Hazlitt, Brougham, Novello and Horace Smith. The last-named became one of Shelley's most trusted friends.²⁰ These new friends enlarged his list of acquaintances considerably, for up to this time he seems to have had no friends except Godwin, Hogg and Peacock.

In the early spring of 1818, the Shelleys went to Italy, melancholy with the thought of separation from the Hunts.²¹ The letters from Shelley to Hunt during the next four years form an important part of Shelley's correspondence.

The part played by Shelley in the invitation extended to Hunt to join Lord Byron and himself in Italy and to become one of the editors of a periodical will be treated minutely in the next chapter. It is sufficient here to say that he was actuated by a desire to better Hunt's finances and to enjoy his society—a pleasure he had been pining for ever since they had been separated, and, in case of a return to England, regarded as the one joy "among all the other sources of regret and discomfort with which England abounds for me. . . . Shaking hands with you is worth all the trouble; the rest is clear loss."²²

¹⁹ (a) *The Examiner*, January 26, 1817. (b) *Ibid.*, February 12, 1817. (c) *Ibid.*, August 31, 1817. (d) Hunt, *Correspondence*, I, p. 114; August 27, 1817.

²⁰ Shelley said of Horace Smith: "but is it not odd that the only truly generous person I ever knew, who had money to be generous with, should be a stockbroker." (Hunt, *Autobiography*, I, p. 211.) See also *Letter to Maria Gisborne*, ll. 247-253; Forman, *Works of Shelley*, III, p. 225 ff.

²¹ *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 3; March 22, 1818.

²² *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 141; November 13, 1819.

Further, he knew that Hunt longed for Italy, and he wished to help Byron in the cause of liberalism. To bring both ends about, he shouldered a burden that he was ill able to bear. An annuity of £200 for the support of his two children, an annuity of £100 to Peacock, perpetual demand for large sums from Godwin, occasional assistance rendered the Gisbornes, partial support of Jane Clarendon, loans to Byron, and the support of his family, were the drains already upon him—met, in the main by money raised on *post obits* at half value.

The amount of Hunt's indebtedness to Shelley can be estimated only approximately. The first reference to a financial transaction between them after the "princely offer"²³ is to be found in Mary Shelley's letter of December 6, 1816, in which she wondered that Hunt had not acknowledged the "receipt of so large a sum." Professor Dowden thinks this may be an allusion to Shelley's response to an appeal for the poor of Spitalfields which had appeared in *The Examiner* five days previously.²⁴ Shelley's offers to Hunt to borrow £100 from Byron²⁵ and to stand security for a loan from Charles Cowden Clarke,²⁶ and an attempt to borrow from Samuel Rogers²⁷ are not developed by any further facts, but it is necessary to take note of them in a general estimate. Before leaving England, Shelley arranged with Ollier for a loan of £100 for Hunt, a debt which was later liquidated by the sale of the *Literary Pocket Book*.²⁸ At some time before leaving England, Shelley also gave Hunt in one year £1,400²⁹ for the liquidation of his debts, which money was, Medwin says, borrowed from Horace Smith.³⁰ Unfortunately for Shelley, the sum was insufficient

²³ Professor Masson says that one of Shelley's first acts was to offer Hunt £100. It is probable he refers to the occasion already discussed. (*Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and Other Essays*, p. 112.)

²⁴ Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, II, p. 61.

²⁵ Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 331; December 8, 1816.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 336; August 16, 1817.

²⁷ Rogers, *Table Talk*, p. 236.

²⁸ Hunt, *Correspondence*, I, p. 146; September 12, 1819.

²⁹ Hunt, *Autobiography*, II, p. 36; *Correspondence*, I, p. 126.

³⁰ Medwin, *Life of Shelley*, II, p. 137.

to extricate Hunt from his difficulties. Miss Mitford gives the amount as £1,500, instead of £1,400, and adds that Shelley's furniture and bedding were swept off to pay Hunt's creditors;³¹ the inaccuracy of the first statement and the lack of any evidence to support the second, lead one to doubt the story. But it is true that Shelley's income at the time was only £1,000. Even when so far away as Italy, Hunt's money troubles weighed heavily upon Shelley in a continual regret that he could not set him entirely free from his creditors;³² he feared that the incredible exertions Hunt was making on *The Indicator* and on *The Examiner*, and the privations that he endured, would undermine his health.³³ When Hunt finally decided to go to Italy, Shelley assumed, as a matter of course, the chief responsibility of providing the means.

As early as 1818, when Shelley and Byron met in Venice, the matter of the journal was discussed between them and broached to Hunt. December 22, 1818, Shelley wrote him that Byron wished him to come to Italy and that, if money considerations prevented, Byron would lend him £400 or £500. He added that Hunt should not feel uncomfortable in accepting the offer, as it was frankly made, and that his society would give Byron pleasure and service.³⁴ Hunt does not seem to have seriously considered the proposition, for there are few references to it in his correspondence of this year. On the renewal of the plan in 1821, Shelley would never have called on Byron for assistance for Hunt if he himself could have provided otherwise, for his opinion of Byron had changed in the meantime.³⁵ January 25, 1822, Shelley sent £150 for the expenses of the voyage, "within 30 or 40 pounds of what I have contrived to scrape

³¹ Mitford, *Life*, I, p. 280. Jeaffreson, *The Real Shelley*, II, p. 357.

³² Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes*, p. 348; April 5, 1820. He assumed the debt for Hunt's piano as naturally as he did for his own. Prof. Dowden says that John Hunt expected Shelley to become responsible for all of his brother's debts. (*Life of Shelley*, II, p. 458.)

³³ Hunt, *Correspondence*, I, p. 158; November 11, 1820.

³⁴ Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 342.

³⁵ See Chapter IV, p. 89.

together";³⁶ and again on February 23, £250,³⁷ borrowed with security from Byron. Yet Shelley's own exchequer at the time was so low that Mary Shelley wrote in the spring: "We are dreadfully behindhand with money at present. Hunt and our furniture has swallowed up more than our savings."³⁸ On April 10 Shelley stated that he was trying to finish *Charles the First* in order that he might earn £100 for Hunt.

In round numbers it may be calculated that the sum total of Hunt's indebtedness, exclusive of the yearly bequest of £120 paid by Shelley's son, was about £2,500, a very large sum in the light of Shelley's limited resources and other obligations. But it was as ungrudgingly given as it was graciously received. Between the two men there was no distinction of *meum* and *tuum*. More remarkable still, Mary Shelley gave as willingly as her husband. If one is inclined to marvel at such an unusual state of affairs, it must be recalled that both men were under the spell of William Godwin's theories of community of property. Shelley gave as his duty and Hunt received as his due. That the effort involved much deprivation and distress of mind on the part of the giver mars the justice of acceptance by the recipient, retrieved only in part by the belief that Hunt probably did not know the full extent of Shelley's sacrifice, and the knowledge that the former would gladly have endured as much if the conditions had been reversed. The element of self-sacrifice and delicacy on the part of Shelley in concealing it, in after years only added to the beauty of the gift in Hunt's eyes, and even at the time he cannot be accused of indifference.³⁹ Jeaffreson makes the absurd suggestion that Shelley

³⁶ Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, II, p. 456; also *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 252.

³⁷ (a) Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes*, pp. 352, 356. (b) Byron, *Letters and Journals*, VI, p. 11.

³⁸ Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, II, p. 489.

³⁹ Hunt, *Autobiography*, II, pp. 36-37. In August, 1819, Hunt importunes Shelley to give no thought to his affairs (*Correspondence*, I, p. 136). Hunt wrote Mary Shelley on September 7, 1821: "Pray thank Shelley or rather do not, for that kind part of his offer relating to the expenses. I find I have omitted it; but the instinct that led me to do so is more honorable to him than thanks." (*Correspondence*, I, p. 171.)

gave the money as a bribe to the editor of a powerful and flourishing literary journal.⁴⁰ He thinks dodging creditors was a strong bond of mutual interest between the two men. There is evidence that Hunt was in difficulty at the time and that Shelley left a surgeon's bill unpaid,⁴¹ but there is no proof extant of deliberate mutual protection. On the contrary, it is most unlikely.

The Hunts sailed from England in November, 1821, and reached Leghorn nearly nine months after first setting out on a voyage which, in its delays and dangers, Byron compared to the "periplus of Hanno the Carthaginian, and with much the same speed";⁴² Peacock to that of Ulysses.⁴³ Of Shelley's suggestion to make the trip by sea, Hunt wrote: "if he had recommended a balloon, I should have been inclined to try it."⁴⁴ Hogg, with his characteristic humour, remarked that a journey by land would have taken equally long, since Hunt would have stopped to gather all the daisies by the wayside from Paris to Pisa. Both men looked forward to many years together⁴⁵ and Shelley, in his letter of welcome, wrote that wind and waves parted them no more,⁴⁶ an assertion which now sounds like a knell of doom. From Leghorn Shelley conveyed the party to Pisa and installed them in the lower floor of Byron's dwelling, the Lanfranchi Palace.⁴⁷ To Shelley fell the difficult task of keeping Lord Byron in heart for the new undertaking and of reviving Hunt's drooping spirits. Hunt's funds were all gone and in their place was a debt of sixty crowns. The next few days were full of grave anxiety and foreboding for the future, broken only by a delightful Sunday spent in seeing the Cathedral and the Tower. Of this day Hunt wrote: "Good God! what a day was that, compared with

⁴⁰ Jeaffreson, *The Real Shelley*, II, p. 355.

⁴¹ W. M. Rossetti, *Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, I, p. 75.

⁴² *Letters and Journals*, VI, p. 96.

⁴³ Kent, *Leigh Hunt as Poet and Essayist*, p. 28.

⁴⁴ *Autobiography*, II, p. 60.

⁴⁵ *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1863.

⁴⁶ *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 283. June 19, 1822.

⁴⁷ Built by Michaelangelo and situated on the Arno.

all that have followed it! I had my friend with me, arm-in-arm, after a separation of years: he was looking better than I had ever seen him—we talked of a thousand things—we anticipated a thousand pleasures.”⁴⁸ Then came the fatal Monday with its shipwreck of many hopes—in its tragic sequel too well known to need repetition here. Hunt’s last services to his friend were his assistance rendered at the cremation and his contribution of the now famous Latin epitaph “*cor cordium*.”⁴⁹

With Shelley perished Hunt’s chief hope in life; in the opinion of his son, he was never the same man again. In 1832, at his period of darkest depression, he wrote: “If you ask me how it is that I bear all this, I answer, that I love nature and books, and think well of the capabilities of human kind. I have known Shelley, I have known my mother.”⁵⁰ In 1844 he claimed as his proudest title, the “Friend of Shelley.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ *The Liberal*, I, p. 103.

⁴⁹ Brandes attributes the inscription to Mary Shelley. (*Main Currents in Nineteen Century Literature*, IV, p. 208.)

⁵⁰ *Correspondence*, I, p. 269.

⁵¹ After Shelley’s death, Mary Shelley decided to remain in Italy in order to assist with *The Liberal*. She considered Hunt “expatriated at the request and desire of others,” and, in helping him, she thought to fulfil any obligation that Shelley might have assumed in the scheme. For her services she received thirty-three pounds. She lived for some time in the same house with the Hunts after they separated from Lord Byron, but the arrangement was an unhappy one. Disagreements, beginning with a misunderstanding concerning the possession of Shelley’s heart, dragged through the winter. Fortunately everything was adjusted before they separated. July, 1823, she wrote of Hunt: “he is all kindness, consideration and friendship—all feeling of alienation towards me has disappeared to its last dregs.” (Marshall, *The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin*, London, 1889, II, p. 81.) And again: “But thank heaven we are now the best friends in the world. . . . It is a delightful thing, my dear Jane, to be able to express one’s affection upon an old and tried friend like Hunt, and one so passionately attached to my Shelley as he was, and is. . . . He was displeased with me for many just reasons, but he found me willing to expiate, as far as I could, the evil I had done; his heart again warmed, and if when I return you find me more amiable, and more willing to suffer with patience than I was, it is to him that I owe this benefit.” (*Ibid.*, II, p. 85.)

The first printed notice of Shelley was in *The Examiner* of December 1, 1816. Therefore to Hunt belongs in this case, as in that of Keats, the credit of discovery. It is difficult to account for Hunt's tardiness of recognition,⁵² coming as it did six years after Shelley first wrote him, five years after the Finnerty poem, three years after *Queen Mab*, and two years after the visit in prison.⁵³ Also Shelley had sent contributions to *The Examiner*, which Hunt had not accepted, but which he vaguely recalled at the time of writing his first review on Shelley. It was inspired by the announcement of *Alastor*, and consisted of about ten lines, embodied in the article on Keats and Reynolds already referred to. Hunt pronounced Shelley "a very striking and original thinker." Shelley's reply to a letter from Hunt, telling him of the notice, pictures him anxiously scouring the countryside about Bath for the sight of a copy and buoyed up at last by the news of one five miles distant.

This notice was followed by the publication of the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* in *The Examiner* of January 19, 1817; a notice of the Chancery suit, January 26 and February 2; and an extract from *Laon and Cythna*, November 30. A review of the *Revolt of Islam* ran through three numbers, January 25, February 8 and 22, 1818. Shelley's system of charity and his crusade against tyranny, as set forth in the preface, Hunt loudly applauded. Many extracts were italicized for the guidance of the public. The beauties of the poem were pronounced to be its mysticism, its wildness, its depth of sentiment, its grandeur of imagery, and its varied and sweet versification. In the boldness of speculation and in the love of virtue Hunt saw a resemblance to Lucretius, while in the gloom and imagination of certain passages, particularly in the grandeur of the supernatural architecture, he was reminded of Dante. The defects were pronounced to be obscurity of narrative and sameness of image and metaphor. The review closed with the prophecy "we have no doubt he is destined to be one of the leading spirits of the age."

⁵² Jeaffreson assigns the cause of Hunt's neglect to his ignorance of the fact that he could suck money out of Shelley. *The Real Shelley*, II, p. 352.

⁵³ Mac-Carthy in *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 302.

The *Quarterly Review* of May, 1818, accused Shelley⁵⁴ of atheism and of dissolute conduct in private life; the same journal of April, 1819, reviewing the *Revolt of Islam* on the basis of the suppressed version of *Laon and Cythna*, though it did not fail to appreciate the genius and beauty of the poem, charged Shelley with a predilection for incest and with a frantic dislike for Christianity. It called the support of *The Examiner* "the sweet undersong of the weekly journal."⁵⁵ The two attacks were met by a strong protest from Hunt,⁵⁶ particularly in regard to the part dealing with Shelley's life. He denied the propriety of such discussion in public criticism and declared that he had never known Shelley to "deviate, notwithstanding his theories, even into a single action which those who differ with him might think blameable." His life at Marlow was described as spent in "beautiful charity and generosity" and was likened to that of Plato. In 1821 an attack on Shelley by Hazlitt was met by an angry warning from Hunt and a threat to become his public enemy, if the offense were repeated.⁵⁷ Hunt's reason for taking this defensive attitude was that he knew that Shelley suffered greatly from such malignant exploitations and that he would not defend himself; therefore he made his friend's cause his own and wrote: "I reckon upon your leaving your personal battles to me,"⁵⁸ much in the same manner as Shelley had assumed his money troubles.

Following the review of the *Revolt of Islam*, a notice of

⁵⁴ Shelley was deeply wounded by the attack. He wrote Hunt: "As to what relates to yourself and me, it makes me melancholy to consider the dreadful wickedness of the heart which would have prompted such expressions as those with which the anonymous writer gloats over my domestic calamities and the perversion of understanding with which he paints your character." (Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes*, p. 340; December 22, 1818.)

⁵⁵ Shelley at first attributed the article in the *Quarterly* to Southey on the grounds of his enmity to *The Examiner* which, Shelley declared, had been the "crown of thorns worn by this unredeemed Redeemer for many years. Southey denied the authorship. (Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes*, p. 341; December 22, 1818.)

⁵⁶ *The Examiner*, September 26, October 3 and 10, 1819. See also *Correspondence*, I, pp. 125-126.

⁵⁷ *Correspondence*, I, p. 169.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 166.

Rosalind and Helen and of *Lines Written among the Euganean Hills*⁵⁹ appeared in *The Examiner* of May 9, 1819. Attention was called to the poet's optimism and to his great love of nature: "the beauty of the external world has an answering heart, and the very whispers of the wind a meaning." *The Cenci*, published in 1820, contained in its dedication a glowing tribute to Hunt, an honour in Shelley's opinion only in a small degree worthy of his friend.⁶⁰ Hunt was intoxicated with the honour and wrote: "I feel as if you had bound, not only my head, but my very soul and body with laurels."⁶¹ On the subject of the tragedy he was equally enthusiastic: "What a noble book, Shelley, have you given us! What a true, stately, and yet affectionate mixture of poetry, philosophy, and human nature, horror, and all redeeming sweetness of intention, for there is an undersong of suggestion through it all, that sings, as it were, after the storm is over, like a brook in April."⁶² In a public expression of his opinion in *The Examiner* of March 19, 1820, Hunt pronounced *The Cenci* the greatest dramatic production of the day. Writing of the drama again in the same journal of July 19 and 26, 1820, he called Shelley "a framer of mighty lines" and continued: "Majesty and Love do sit on one throne in the lofty buildings of his poetry; and they will be found there, at a late and we trust a happier day, on a seat immortal as themselves."

One of Hunt's most perfect poems, *Jaffár*, is inscribed to the memory of Shelley. The praise of *Jaffár* and his friend's undying loyalty immediately suggest to the reader that Hunt

⁵⁹ See Hunt, *Correspondence*, I, p. 130.

⁶⁰ For Shelley's desire for Hunt's good opinion, see *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 167. Hunt's collection of poems, published during 1818, under the title of *Foliage* was dedicated to Shelley: "Had I known a person more highly endowed than yourself with all the qualities that it becomes a man to possess, I had selected for this work the ornament of his name. One more gentle, honorable, innocent and brave; one of more exalted toleration of all who do and think evil; one who knows better how to receive, and how to confer a benefit though he must ever confer far more than he can receive; one of simpler, and in the highest sense of the word, of purer life and manners I never knew: and I had already been fortunate in friendships when your name was added to the list."

⁶¹ *Correspondence*, I, p. 153.

⁶² *Ibid.*, I, p. 154.

may have been celebrating his own and Shelley's friendship. The last review to appear during Shelley's lifetime by Hunt was that of *Prometheus Unbound* in three numbers of *The Examiner* of 1822. A projected review of *Adonais* alluded to in a letter of Hunt's does not seem to have seen the light of publication, but a reference in a letter at the time is worth noting: "It is the most Delphic poetry I have seen in a long while: full of those embodyings of the most subtle and airy imaginations,—those arrestings and explanations of the most shadowy yearnings of our being."⁶³ The well-known account of Shelley's rescue of a woman on Hampstead Heath was told in *The Literary Examiner* of August 23, 1823.⁶⁴ The same magazine of September 20 of the same year⁶⁵ contained the following *Sonnet to Percy Shelley*, given here because of its general inaccessibility:

"Hast thou from earth, then, really passed away,
And mingled with the shadowy mass of things
Which were, but are not? Will thy harp's dear strings
No more yield music to the rapid play
Of thy swift thoughts, now turned thou art to clay?
Hark! Is that rushing of thy spirit's wings,
When (like the skylark, who in mounting sings)
Soaring through high imagination's way,
Thou pour'dst thy melody upon the earth,
Silent for ever? Yes, wild ocean's wave
Hath o'er thee rolled. But whilst within the grave
Thou sleepest, let me in the love of thy pure worth
One thing foretell,—that thy great fame shall be
Progressive as Time's flood, eternal as the sea!"

In *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* appeared the first biographical memoir of Shelley, a sketch of some seventy pages.⁶⁶ It shows great appreciation of the fine and

⁶³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 179; March 26, 1822.

⁶⁴ In an article on the *Suburbs of Genoa and the Country about London*, pp. 118–119.

⁶⁵ Dated August 4, 1823.

⁶⁶ The second part of the sketch was in answer to the *Quarterly Review's* attack on the *Posthumous Poems*, which Mrs. Shelley, aided by Hunt, had published in 1824. This account was reworked in 1850 for the *Autobiography* and was taken in part for the preface to an edition of Shelley's works in 1871. Hunt wrote another biographical sketch of Shelley for S. C. Hall's *Book of Gems* (p. 40). He gave a fine description of his physical appearance not often quoted.

gentle qualities of his rare genius and defends some of the weak points of his career. The description of his personal appearance, of the life at Marlowe, and the few anecdotes are often quoted. But on the whole, it lacks the bold strokes of vivid portraiture and it is very disappointing.⁶⁷ There was probably no one, with the exception of his wife, who knew Shelley so well as Hunt and who was, therefore, in a position to give as complete and intimate an idea of him. It was Mrs. Shelley's wish that Hunt should be her husband's biographer, for she thought that he, "perhaps above all others, understood his nature and his genius."⁶⁸ Hunt, in *The Spectator* of August 13, 1859, gave as his reason for not writing Shelley's life that he "could not survive enough persons." But it is to be questioned if he were fitted for the task. His son did not think that he was because of his attention to details and his irresistible tendency to analysis: "a mind, in short, like that of Hamlet, cultivated rather than corrected by the trials of life, was scarcely suited to comprehend the strong instincts, indomitable will, and complete unity of idea which distinguished Shelley."⁶⁹

In the *Tatler* of August 1, 1831, Hunt wrote that "Mr. Shelley was a platonic philosopher, of the acutest and loftiest kind," and that he belonged to the school of Plato and Æschylus, as Keats belonged to that of Spenser and Milton. Following *The Tatler* was the preface to *The Mask of Anarchy*,⁷⁰ published in 1832, originally designed for *The Examiner* in 1819, but laid aside by the editor because he thought the public not discerning enough "to do justice to the sincerity and kind-heartedness of the spirit that walked in this flaming robe of verse." The preface eulogizes the poet's spiritual nature and his "seraphic purpose of good." In *The Seer*, 1841, Shelley's qualities of heart were pronounced more enduring than his genius.⁷¹

⁶⁷ It was considered by the *Athencum* to be the best part of the book, and to be the "powerful portrait of a benevolent man." (VI, p. 70.)

⁶⁸ Letter to Ollier, February, 1858.

⁶⁹ *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1863.

⁷⁰ Forman, *Shelley Library*, p. 113, says that the motto from *Laon and Cynthia* was added by Hunt.

⁷¹ Pt. 2, p. 37.

Imagination and Fancy contained an essay and selections from his poems. Here Hunt makes the curious statement that little in the poems is purely poetical, but rather moral, political, and speculative. It is noteworthy that he predicts, probably for the first time, that, had Shelley lived, he would have been the greatest dramatic writer since the days of Elizabeth, if not, indeed, actually so, through what he did accomplish; a statement often repeated. He says: "If Coleridge is the sweetest of our poets, Shelley is at once the most ethereal and gorgeous, the one who has clothed his thought in draperies of the most evanescent and most magnificent words and imagery. . . . Shelley . . . might well call himself Ariel."⁷² In connection with Shelley's ethereal qualities, Mrs. James T. Fields quotes Hunt as having said on another occasion that Shelley always seemed to him as if he were "just alit from the planet Mercury, bearing a winged wand tipped with flame."⁷³ In *Imagination and Fancy*, Hunt continues: "Not Milton himself is more learned in Grecisms, or nicer in entomological propriety; and nobody, throughout, has a style so Orphic and primeval."

It is a touching circumstance that Hunt's last letter bore reference to Shelley, and that his last effort as a public writer, made only a few days before his death, was in vindication of Shelley's character.⁷⁴ The publication of the *Shelley Memorials*, 1859, in which Hunt had a part, provoked an unfavorable review in *The Spectator*. Hunt replied in the next number⁷⁵ of the same paper. In particular he asserted Shelley's truthfulness, which had been assailed in respect to his story of the attempted assassination in Wales. He held that Shelley was not a man to be judged by ordinary rules, but that he was the highest possible exponent of humanity—an approach to divinity.

Hunt's literary relation with Shelley falls into two divisions; publications written for Hunt's periodicals, and received by Hunt

⁷² p. 217.

⁷³ *A Shelf of Old Books*, p. 291.

⁷⁴ Hunt's *Book of the Sonnet*, which appeared posthumously, contained a criticism of Shelley's sonnet on *Ozymandias* (I, p. 87).

⁷⁵ August 13 and 20, 1859.

in order to give Shelley an outlet of expression denied him in the more conservative papers; and second, positive literary imitation. Besides the poems quoted in Hunt's criticisms of Shelley, the first includes a review of Godwin's *Mandeville*,⁷⁶ a letter of protest regarding the second edition of *Queen Mab*,⁷⁷ *Marianne's Dream*,⁷⁸ *Song on a Faded Violet*,⁷⁹ *The Sunset*,⁸⁰ *The Question*,⁸¹ *Good Night*,⁸² *Sonnet, Ye Hasten to the Grave*,⁸³ *To ——— (Lines to a Reviewer)*,⁸⁴ *November, 1815*,⁸⁵ *Love's Philosophy*,⁸⁶ and the contributions designed by Shelley for *The Liberal* and published after his death.⁸⁷ Productions which were written for Hunt's papers, but were not accepted, were *Peter Bell the Third*, *The Mask of Anarchy*, *Julian and Maddalo*, a letter on the persecution of Richard Carlile,⁸⁸ letters on Italy, and a review of Peacock's *Rhododaphne*. Hunt's failure to accept what was sent him greatly discouraged Shelley at times: "Mine is a life of failures; Peacock says my poetry is composed of day dreams and nightmares, and Leigh Hunt does not think it good enough for *The Examiner*."

On a Fete at Carlton House, an attack on the Prince Regent, though perhaps directly inspired by the account in the dailies of the ball at Carlton House on June 20, 1811, was doubtless influenced by the continued attacks of *The Examiner*. As there are extant only two or three lines of the poem,⁸⁹ it is im-

⁷⁶ *The Examiner*, December 28, 1817.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, July 15, 1821.

⁷⁸ *Literary Pocket Book*, London, 1819. Shelley's signature was Δ and Σ. See Hunt, *Correspondence*, I, 125.

⁷⁹ *Literary Pocket Book*, 1821. (*Works of Shelley*, III, p. 150.)

⁸⁰ *Literary Pocket Book*, 1821. (*Works of Shelley*, III, p. 380.)

⁸¹ *Literary Pocket Book*, 1822. (*Works of Shelley*, IV, p. 32.)

⁸² *Ibid.*, 1822. (*Works of Shelley*, IV, p. 49.)

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 1823. (*Works of Shelley*, IV, p. 63.)

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1823. (*Works of Shelley*, IV, p. 41.)

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1823. Mr. Forman thinks that the poem refers to Harriet Shelley's death and that the date is a disguise. (*Works of Shelley*, III, p. 146.)

⁸⁶ *The Indicator*, December 22, 1819.

⁸⁷ Chapter IV.

⁸⁸ *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 291; November 3, 1819.

⁸⁹ *Works of Shelley*, IV, p. 359.

possible to judge of the extent of the influence, but in Shelley's letters to Hogg and to Edward Graham describing the poem, there is resemblance in tone and epithet to *The Examiner*. A letter from Shelley to Lord Ellenborough on the occasion of Eaton's sentence for publishing the third part of Paine's *Age of Reason* followed a long series of articles by Hunt on the prerogative of liberty of speech.⁹⁰

A meeting of Reformers at Manchester on the sixteenth of August, 1819, for the purpose of discussing quietly the annual meeting of Parliament, universal suffrage, and voting by ballot, was dispersed by military force. Articles setting forth the long sufferings of the Reformers, charging the authorities with wanton bloodshed, and ridiculing the absurd trial of the offenders, appeared in *The Examiner* of August 22, 29, September 5, 19 and 26. *The Mask of Anarchy*, written on the occasion of the massacre at Manchester, was sent to Leigh Hunt for publication sometime before the first of November, 1819. The sentiment of both men is the same regarding the affair.

Accounts of the death of the Princess Charlotte and of the executions for high treason at Derby of Brandreth, Ludlam and Turner, after a horrible imprisonment, two articles in *The Examiner* of November 9, 1819, inspired Shelley's *Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte*, sometimes known as *We Pity the Plumage, but Forget the Dying Bird*, dated November 12 of the same year. Hunt followed with a second article, *Death of the Princess Charlotte and Indecent Advantage Taken of It*, November 16, 1819. Both writers called attention to the disposition of the public to forget the sufferings of the poor, while it mourned hysterically with royalty; they declared that the administration of justice and the events leading to such crimes were of much greater importance. Three articles in *The Examiner* of October 17, 24 and 31, 1819, on the trial of Richard Carlile for libel, were followed by an open letter on the same case from Shelley to Hunt dated November 3, 1819. By scattered references it can be seen that Shelley fully agreed with Hunt in his opinion of the Prince

⁹⁰ Six months later, December 6, 1812, Hunt addressed a letter to Lord Ellenborough on the same subject in regard to his own sentence.

Regent and of the Ministers, in his attitude toward the corruption of the court and of the army; and in his proposed regulation of taxes and of the public debt.

Œdipus Tyrannus or Swellfoot the Tyrant, begun August, 1820, succeeded a series of articles, beginning in *The Examiner* of June 11, 1820, and continuing throughout nineteen numbers,⁹¹ on the subject of George IV's attempt to divorce his wife.⁹² Abhorrence of the king's perfidy and of his ministers' support, sympathy for Queen Caroline, and minor details parallel closely Hunt's version in *The Examiner*. This passage occurs in the article of June 9: "An animal sets himself down, month after month, at Milan, to watch at her doors and windows, to intercept discarded servants and others who know what a deposition might be worth, and thus to gather poison for one of those venomous Green Bags, which have so long infected and nauseated the people, and are now to infect the Queen." This seems to be the germ of the passage in Shelley's poem beginning:

"Behold this bag! it is
The poison Bag of that Green Spider huge,
On which our spies sulked in ovation through
The streets of Thebes, when they were paved with dead."

Then follows the plot to throw the contents upon the Queen.

The handling of the heroic couplet, employed in the *Letter to Maria Gisborne* and in *Epipsychidon*, as well as in *Julian and Maddalo*,⁹³ has been already discussed in its relationship to Hunt's use of the same. Shelley, in a letter to Hunt, explains his position in regard to the language of *Julian and Maddalo*:

"You will find the little piece, I think, in some degree consistent with your own ideas of the manner in which poetry ought to be written. I have employed a certain familiar style of language to express the actual way in

⁹¹ June 11, 18, 25, July 2, 9, August 27, September 3, 10, October 1, 8, 15, 22, December 3, 10, 17; in 1821, February 4, August 12, 19, and September 9. The last three articles were written after the Queen's death.

⁹² Keats's *The Cap and Bells* deals with the same.

⁹³ Shelley gave directions that the poem should be printed like Hunt's *Hero and Leander*. *Works of Shelley*, III, p. 101.

which people talk to each other, whom education and a certain refinement of sentiment have placed above the use of vulgar idioms. I use the word *vulgar* in its most extensive sense. The vulgarity of rank and fashion is as gross, in its way, as that of poverty, and its cant terms equally expressive of base conceptions, and therefore, equally unfit for poetry. Not that the familiar style is to be admitted in the treatment of a subject wholly ideal, or in that part of any subject which relates to common life, where the passion, exceeding a certain limit, touches the boundary of that which is ideal. Strong passion expresses itself in metaphor, borrowed alike from subjects remote or near, and casts over all the shadow of its own greatness."⁹⁴

Rosalind and Helen, the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*, *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, and *Peter Bell the Third*⁹⁵ show a similar influence. *The Letter to Maria Gisborne* bears a resemblance to Hunt's epistolary style, and was written, Mr. Forman thinks, for circulation in the Hunt circle only.⁹⁶ It was through Hunt, so Shelley states in the dedication, that he knew the *Peter Bells* of Wordsworth and of John Hamilton Reynolds. Shelley's qualified adoption in these poems of Hunt's theory of poetic language is seen in the choice of a vocabulary in dialogue nearer everyday usage than the more remote one of his other poems. Yet the result does not bear any great resemblance to Hunt. Shelley's unvarying refinement and sensibility kept him from committing the same errors of taste, but his work suffered rather than gained by an innovation which was probably a concession to his friendship for Hunt and not a strong conviction. With the exception of the descriptive passages, the keynote of these poems is on a lower poetic pitch.

On subjects of Italian art and literature the friends held much the same opinion. At times Shelley seems to have been led by Hunt's judgment, as in his conclusions regarding Raphael

⁹⁴ *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 116; August 15, 1819. The letter instructs Hunt to throw the poem into the fire or not as he sees fit and requests him, in preference to Peacock, to correct the proofs. "Can you take it as a compliment that I prefer to trouble you?"

⁹⁵ Forman wrongly attributes the review of Reynolds' *Peter Bell* in *The Examiner* of April 25, 1819, to Hunt and says that this "flippant notice" by Hunt inspired Shelley's poem. *Ibid.*, II, p. 288. Reynolds asked Keats to request Hunt to review his poem. Keats did it himself. (Keats, *Works*, III, pp. 246-249.)

⁹⁶ *Works of Shelley*, III, p. 235.

and Michaelangelo.⁹⁷ One passage on the Italian poets indicates a possible borrowing of thought and figure on Shelley's part when he wrote of Boccaccio that he was superior to Ariosto and to Tasso, "the children of a later and colder day. . . . How much do I admire Boccaccio! What descriptions of nature are those in his little introduction to every new day! It is the morning of life stripped of that mist of familiarity which makes it obscure to us."⁹⁸ Hunt wrote: "Petrarch, Boccaccio and Dante are the morning, noon and night of the great Italian day."⁹⁹

Poems which refer directly to Hunt are the fourteen lines in the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*,¹⁰⁰ possibly the fragment, beginning, "For me, my friend, if not that tears did tremble."¹⁰¹ A cancelled passage of the *Adonais* describes Hunt thus:

And then came one of sweet and carnal looks,
Those soft smiles to his dark and night-like eyes
Were as the clear and ever-living brooks
Are to the obscure fountains whence they rise,

⁹⁷ Hunt, *Correspondence*, I, p. 116, 141; April 24, 1818, and September 6, 1819. Cf. with *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 121; September 3, 1819. (Editor says dated wrongly.)

⁹⁸ *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 127; September 27, 1819.

⁹⁹ *Correspondence*, I, p. 123; August 4, 1818.

¹⁰⁰ "You will see Hunt—one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is—a tomb;
Who is what others seem; his room no doubt
Is still adorned by many a cast from Shout,
With graceful flowers tastefully placed about,
And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,
And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung,—
The gifts of the most learned among some dozens
Of female friends, sisters-in-law and cousins,
And there he is with his eternal puns,
Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
Thundering for money at a poet's door;
Alas! it is no use to say 'I'm poor!'"

¹⁰¹ Mr. Forman thinks that it may be part of the original draft of *Rosalind and Helen*; if so, it is still a very close approximation of Shelley's opinion of Hunt (*Works of Shelley*, III, p. 403). William Rossetti and Felix Rabbe think that it was addressed to Hunt.

Showing how pure they are; a Paradise
 Of happy truth upon his forehead low
 Lay, making wisdom lovely, in the guise
 Of earth-awakening morn upon the brow
 Of star-deserted heaven, while ocean gleams below,

His song, though very sweet, was low and faint,
 A single strain—¹⁰²

The thirty-fifth strophe of the present version refers to Hunt.

Shelley's last letter had reference to Hunt.¹⁰³ His last literary effort was a poem comparing Hunt to a firefly and welcoming him to Italy, just as Hunt's last letter and last public utterance bore reference to Shelley—strange coincidence, but striking testimony to their mutual devotion. An instance of Shelley's overestimation of Hunt's ability is seen in a passage where he says that Hunt excels in tragedy in the power of delineating passion and, what is more necessary, of connecting and developing it, "the last an incredible effort for himself but easy for Hunt."¹⁰⁴ He greatly valued and trusted Hunt's affection, at times calling him his best¹⁰⁵ and his only friend.¹⁰⁶ If the tender solicitude and veneration of a beautiful spirit for a man of vastly inferior abilities seems strange, it is but a witness to the humility of true genius.

¹⁰² Wise's edition of *Adonais*, p. 2. London, 1887.

¹⁰³ To his wife. *Work of Shelley*, VIII, p. 288; July 4, 1822.

¹⁰⁴ Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes*, p. 350; April 5, 1820.

¹⁰⁵ Hunt, *Correspondence*, I, p. 136. Professor George Edward Woodberry says that Shelley had the "kindest feeling of gratitude and respect . . . but nothing more" towards Hunt. (*Studies in Letters and Life*, p. 153.)

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. 158. November 11, 1820. *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 150; November 23, 1819.

CHAPTER IV.

Byron's Politics and Religion—His sympathy with Hunt in prison—His impression of the man—Hunt's Defense of Byron and Criticism of his works—*The Liberal*—*Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*.

It is not strange that Lord Byron, son of an English father and a Scotch mother, born of a long line of adventurous and warlike sailors and illustrious and loyal knights, with a strain of royalty and madness on one side and eccentricity and immorality on the other, should have fallen heir in an unusual degree to a nature whose virtues and vices were complex and contradictory. Its singularities are nowhere more apparent than in the mutations of his friendships.

Prior to his acquaintance with Hunt, Byron had taken his seat in the House of Lords and had made speeches against the framebreakers of Nottingham and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. A month after their meeting he made a third speech introducing Major Cartwright's petition for reform in Parliament. The second and third of these measures, in particular, were warmly advocated by *The Examiner*, with which paper Byron was familiar, as references in his letters show. It is therefore not hazardous to surmise that his sympathy with liberal policies, alien to his Tory blood and aristocratic spirit, was due, in part at least, to this influence. Byron's political principles on the whole were as evanescent and intermittent as a will-o'-the-wisp.¹ His chief tenets were the assertion of the individual; antagonism against all authority; a striving after

¹ Sir Walter Scott has given a good estimate of them: "Our sentiments agreed a good deal, except on the subject of religion and politics, upon neither of which I was inclined to believe that Lord Byron entertained very fixed principles. . . . On Politics he used sometimes to express a high strain of what is now called Liberalism; but it appeared to me that the pleasure that it afforded him as a vehicle of displaying his wit and satire against individuals in office was at the bottom of his habit of thinking. At heart I would have termed Byron a patrician on principle." (Moore, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, I, p. 616.)

freedom. Brandes, Elze and Treitscke agree in attributing his political enthusiasm to the intense passion of his nature rather than to his moral convictions.² His religious convictions were as fugitive as his political and, like those of Hunt and other advanced thinkers of the age, seem to have been without deference to any existing creed or dogma. At his gloomiest moments he confessed that he denied nothing but doubted everything. Hunt says of Byron's religion that he "did not know what he was. . . . He was a Christian by education, he was an infidel by reading. He was a Christian by habit, but he was no Christian upon reflection."³ The phrase, "I am of the opposition" applies to his religion as well as to his politics, as indeed it serves as the key-note to almost every action of his life.

Leigh Hunt has given a characteristic account of his first sight of Byron "rehearsing the part of Leander," in the River Thames sometime before he went to Greece in 1809:

"I saw nothing in Lord Byron at that time, but a young man, who, like myself, had written a bad volume of poems; and though I had sympathy with him on this account, and more respect for his rank than I was willing to suppose, my sympathy was not an agreeable one; so, contenting myself with seeing his lordship's head bob up and down in the water, like a buoy, I came away. Lord Byron when he afterwards came to see me in prison, was pleased to regret that I had not stayed. He told me, that the sight of my volume at Harrow had been one of his incentives to write verses, and that he had had the same passion for friendship which I had displayed in it. To my astonishment he quoted some of the lines, and would not hear me speak ill of them."⁴

Hunt's *Juvenilia*, beyond having served as one of the incentives to the writing of Byron's *Hours of Idleness*, does not seem to have affected it. For Hunt's undercurrent of friendship and cheerfulness were substituted Byron's prevailing notes of amorousness and melancholy.

The actual acquaintance of the two men did not begin until 1813, when Thomas Moore, since 1811 a staunch admirer of Hunt's political courage and of his literary talent, and one of the visitors welcomed to Surrey Gaol, mentioned the circum-

² Hancock, *The French Revolution and English Poets*, p. 84.

³ Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries, p. 128.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1; *Autobiography*, II, p. 85.

stances of his imprisonment to Lord Byron, likewise a sympathizer with the attitude of *The Examiner* towards the Prince Regent. Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson⁵ thinks that it was this reckless sympathy with the libeller of the Prince Regent that led Byron to reprint with *The Corsair*, eight lines addressed in 1812 to the Princess Charlotte, *Wcep, daughter of a Royal Line*. The retaliation of one of the Tory papers goaded Byron to write in return an article which strongly resembles Hunt's famous libel⁶ on the Prince Regent. Byron expressed a wish to call on Hunt with Moore, and a visit followed on May 20, 1813.⁷ Five days later Hunt wrote:

"I have had Lord B. here again. He came on Sunday, by himself, in a very frank, unceremonious manner, and knowing what I wanted for my poem [*Story of Rimini*] brought me the last new *Travels in Italy* in two quarto volumes, of which he requests my acceptance, with the air of one who did not seem to think himself conferring the least obligation. This will please you. It strikes me that he and I shall become *friends*, literally and cordially speaking: there is something in the texture of his mind and feelings that seems to resemble mine to a thread; I think we are cut out of the same piece, only a little different wear may have altered our respective naps a little."⁸

With the pride of a sycophant in the presence of a lord Hunt relates that Byron would not let the footman carry the books but gave "you to understand that he was prouder of being a friend and a man of letters than a lord. It was thus by flattering one's vanity he persuaded us of his own freedom from it: for he could see very well, that I had more value for lords than I supposed."⁹ In June of the same year Hunt invited Byron, Moore and Mitchell to dine with him in prison. Among several others who came in during the evening was Mr. John Scott, later a severe critic of Byron in *The Champion*.¹⁰ Many years after Moore, in his *Life of Byron*, wrote of the gathering with venom, recalling Scott as an assailant of Byron's

⁵ *The Real Lord Byron*, I, p. 277.

⁶ *Letters and Journals*, III, pp. 29-31. The article was not published.

⁷ Nichol, *Life of Bryon*, p. 84, incorrectly gives 1812 as the date.

⁸ *Correspondence*, I, p. 88, May 25, 1813.

⁹ *Autobiography*, II, p. 85.

¹⁰ *The Champion*, April 7, 14, 21, 1816.

"living fame, while another [Hunt] less manful, would reserve the cool venom for his grave."¹¹

Byron esteemed Hunt greatly during the first year of their acquaintance. His advances show a desire for intimacy which goes far toward contradicting the statements sometimes made that the overtures were on Hunt's side only.¹² Byron expressed himself thus at the time:

"Hunt is an extraordinary character and not exactly of the present age. He reminds me more of the Pym and Hampden times—much talent, great independence of spirit, and an austere, yet not repulsive, aspect. If he goes on *qualis ab incepto*, I know few men who will deserve more praise or obtain it. I must go and see him again—a rapid succession of adventures since last summer, added to some serious uneasiness and business, have interrupted our acquaintance; but he is a man worth knowing; and though for his own sake, I wish him out of prison, I like to study character in such situations. He has been unshaken and will continue so. I don't think him deeply versed in life:—he is the bigot of virtue (not religion) and enamoured of the beauty of that 'empty name,' as the last breath of Brutus pronounced and every day proves it. He is perhaps, a little opinionated, as all men who are the *center of circles*, wide or narrow—the Sir Oracles—in whose name two or three are gathered together—must be, and as even Johnson was: but withal, a valuable man, and less vain than success and even the consciousness of preferring 'the right to the expedient,' might excuse."

December 2, 1813, he wrote to Hunt: "It is my wish that our acquaintance, or, if you please to accept it, friendship, may be permanent. . . . I have a thorough esteem for that independence of spirit which you have maintained with sterling talent, and at the expense of some suffering."¹³ Cordial intercourse between the two men continued after Hunt's removal from Surrey Gaol to lodgings in Edgeware Road, where Byron became one of his most frequent visitors and correspondents. In the Hunt household Byron laid aside his ordinary reserve. There are records of his riding the children's rocking horse; of presents of game; loans of books; letters presented from a Paris correspondent for *The Examiner*; and gifts of boxes and tickets for Drury Lane Theatre, of which he was one of the

¹¹ *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, p. 402.

¹² Byron, *Letters and Journals*, II, p. 157, December 1, 1813.

¹³ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 296–297.

managers. This last Hunt would not accept for fear of sacrificing his critical independence. In *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, Hunt claims that this familiarity proceeded from an "instinct of immeasurable distance."¹⁴

It was not until Byron's matrimonial difficulties in 1816 that Hunt, inert and depressed from his long confinement, bestirred himself to return a single one of the calls. Byron's separation from his wife in 1816 and the subsequent scandal aroused in Hunt that instinctive protection and active loyalty for friends abused, already discussed in a review of his relations with Keats and Shelley. The conjugal troubles and libertinism of the Prince Regent had brought forth only scorn and vituperation from the editor of *The Examiner*, but difficulties of equal notoriety at closer range in the lives of his friends evoked only sympathy and protection. He asserted that there was no positive knowledge as to the cause of the trouble and much depraved speculation, envy and falsehood, yet "had he [Byron] been as the scandal-mongers represented him, we should nevertheless, if we thought our arm worth his using, have stood by him in his misfortunes to the last."¹⁵ A prophecy of a near reconciliation and a too-gushing picture of renewed domesticity are somewhat grotesque in the light of later events. For this defense Byron was very grateful. January 12, 1822, he wrote that Scott, Jeffrey and Leigh Hunt "were the only literary men of numbers whom I know (and some of whom I have served,) who dared venture even an anonymous word in my favour, just then . . . the third was under no kind of obligation to me."¹⁶ Hunt's opinion in the matter underwent a transformation after the fateful Italian visit; he then declared that Byron wooed with genius, married for money, and strove for a reconciliation because of pique.¹⁷

The *Story of Rimini*, which had been submitted to Byron from time to time and which was dedicated to him, appeared likewise in 1816. Byron seems to have accepted the familiar tone of the inscription at the time in all good faith "as a

¹⁴ Page 36.

¹⁵ *The Examiner*, April 21, 1816.

¹⁶ *Letters and Journals*, VI, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 6.

public compliment and a private kindness"¹⁸ although *Blackwood's* of March, 1828, states, perhaps not seriously, that Byron in his copy had substituted for Hunt's name "impudent varlet." As late as April 11, 1817, Byron wrote from Italy that he expected to return to Venice by Ravenna and Rimini that he might take notes of the scenery for Hunt.¹⁹

But a letter to Moore from Venice, June 1, 1818, seems to mark a disillusionment on the part of Byron:

"Hunt's letter is probably the exact piece of vulgar coxcombry that you might expect from his situation. He is a good man with some practical element in his chaos, but spoilt by the Christ Church Hospital and a Sunday newspaper to say nothing of the Surrey Gaol, which converted him into a martyr. . . . Of my friend Hunt, I have already said that he is anything but vulgar in his manners [a statement repeated again in 1822²⁰]; and of his disciples, therefore, I will not judge of their manners from their verses. They may be honourable and gentlemanly men for what I know; but the latter quality is studiously excluded from their publications."²¹

Hunt did not see or hear from Byron from 1817 until 1821. No further mention of Hunt occurs in Byron's writings during this period except the reference to his influence on Barry Cornwall's *Sicilian Story* and *Marcian Colonna*,²² and another to the Cockney School in Byron's controversy with Bowles. In explanation of this break in the intercourse Hunt said, in 1828, that "Byron had become not very fond of his reforming acquaintances."²³

Hunt's criticism of Byron's writings was not an important factor in his early literary development, as was the case with Shelley and Keats. Yet it deserves brief attention. *The Examiner* of October 18, 1812, contained the address of Byron on the opening of the Drury Lane Theatre and a commendation of its "natural domestic touch" and of its independence.

¹⁸ *Letters and Journals*, III, p. 265.

¹⁹ In 1820 Byron translated the Rimini episode of the *Divine Comedy*.

²⁰ Trelawney, *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*, p. 109.

²¹ *Letters and Journals*, V, pp. 590-591.

²² *Letters and Journals*, V, p. 217. This passage is omitted from the letter in which it occurs in Moore's *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, II, p. 437.

²³ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 8.

Hunt's *Feast of the Poets* as it appeared first in *The Reflector* contained no mention of Byron. The separate edition of 1814 devoted seven pages of the added notes to a wordy discussion of his work and to personal advice. Byron in a letter of February 9, 1814, thanked Hunt for the "handsome note." The next mentions of Bryon were in *The Examiner*: a notice of his ode on Napoleon April 24, 1814; *Illustrations of Lord Byron's Works* on September 4 of the same year; an elegy, *Oh Snatched Away in Beauty's Bloom*, April 23, 1815; *The Renegade's Feelings Among the Tombs of Heroes*, March 3, 1816; and finally, an announcement of an opera founded on *The Corsair*, August 31, 1817. A review of the first and second cantos of *Don Juan* appeared in *The Examiner* of October 31, 1819. Byron's extraordinary variety and sudden transition of mood, his power in wielding satire and humor, his knowledge of human nature in its highest and lowest passions, his contribution to the mock-heroic and the sincere, the "strain of rich and deep beauty" in the descriptions were pointed out. Any immoral tendency is denied: "The fact is at the bottom of these questions, that many things are made vicious which are not so by nature; and many things made virtuous, which are only so by calling and agreement; and it is on the horns of this self-created dilemma, that society is continually writhing and getting desperate!" *The Examiner* of August 26, 1821 containing a critique of the third and fourth cantos of *Don Juan*, condemned the "careless contempt of canting moralists." January 23, 1820, there was a notice in *The Examiner* telling of Byron's munificence to a shoemaker; in comment *The Examiner* said: "His lordship's virtues are his own. His frailties have been made for him, in more respects than one, by the faults and follies of society." January 21, 1822, appeared a reprint of *My Boat Is on the Shore*; April 22, the two stanzas from Childe Harold beginning, *Italia, Oh! Italia*; April 29, *Byron's Letters on Bowles's Strictures on Pope*; May 26, a review of two of Bowles's letters to Byron; July 29, an article entitled *Sketches of the Living Poets*.²⁴ The last gave a biographical account

²⁴ Hunt wrongly gives Byron's date of birth as 1791. The article is accompanied with a woodcut.

of Byron. The general traits of his poetry were said to be passion, humour, and learning. It criticized the narrative poems as "too melodramatic, hasty and vague." Hunt's summary of the dramas and of *Don Juan* shows excellent judgment: "For the drama, whatever good passages such a writer will always put forth, we hold that he has no more qualifications than we have; his tendency being to spin every thing out of his own perceptions, and colour it with his own eye. His *Don Juan* is perhaps his best work, and the one by which he will stand or fall with readers who see beyond time and toilets. It far surpasses, in our opinion, all the Italian models on which it is founded, not excepting the far famed *Secchia Rapita*."²⁵ On June 2, 1822, *The Examiner* reviewed *Cain*. The article is chiefly a discussion of the origin of evil. The issue of September 30 contained a reprint of *America*; that of November 18 denied Byron's authorship of *Anastasius*. From July 5, 1823, to November 29 of the same year, there appeared in the *Literary Examiner* friendly criticisms of the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth cantos of *Don Juan*. The reviews consisted chiefly of extracts and a summary of the narrative.

THE LIBERAL.

A letter from Lord Byron dated December 25, 1820, had proposed to Thomas Moore to set up secretly, on their return to London, a weekly newspaper for the purpose of giving "the age some new lights upon policy, poesy, biography, criticism, morality, theology, and all other ism, ality and ology whatsoever. Why, man, if we were to take to this in good earnest, your debts would be paid off in a twelvemonth, and by dint of a little diligence and practice, I doubt not that we could distance the common-place blackguards who have so long disgraced common sense and the common reader. They have no merit but practice and imprudence, both of which we may acquire; and, as for talent and culture, the devil's in't if such proofs as we have given of both can't furnish out something better than the 'funeral baked meats' which have coldly set forth the breakfast table of Great Britain for so many years."²⁶

²⁵ See *Blackwood's*, X, pp. 286, 730.

²⁶ *Letters and Journals*, V, pp. 143-144.

Moore cautiously refused the offer and the idea lay dormant in Byron's mind until he met Shelley at Ravenna in 1821. He then proposed that they should establish a radical paper with Leigh Hunt as editor, the three to be equal partners. Power, money, and notoriety were Byron's chief objects. He frankly acknowledged a desire for enormous gains. He designed to use his proprietary privileges to publish those of his writings that Murray dared not. At the same time Byron had, without doubt, a desire to reform home government and to repay Hunt for his public defense in 1816.²⁷ He may have wished to please Shelley by asking Hunt.²⁸ Undoubtedly he valued Hunt's wide journalistic experience. Moore asserts that in extending the invitation, Byron inconsistently admitted Hunt "not to any degree of confidence or intimacy but to a declared fellowship of fame and interest."²⁹ This, like other of Moore's statements regarding Hunt, is not very plausible in view of the past intimacy.

The most discussed question regarding Byron's motives in inviting Hunt is the extent of his relation to *The Examiner* at that time, and Byron's knowledge of it. Trelawny states that when Byron "*consented* to join Leigh Hunt and others in writing for the 'Liberal,' I think his principal inducement was in the belief that John and Leigh Hunt were proprietors of the 'Examiner';—so when Leigh Hunt at Pisa told him that he was no longer connected with that paper, Byron was taken aback, finding that Hunt would be entirely dependent upon the success of their hazardous project, while he himself would be deprived of that on which he had set his heart,—the use of a weekly paper in great circulation."³⁰ Moore heard indirectly in 1821 that Byron, Shelley and Hunt were to "*conspire* together" in *The Examiner*³¹—a plan nowhere mentioned in the writings of the three men concerned and most unlikely. What Trelawney "thought" conflicts with what

²⁷ Medwin, *Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron*, p. 186.

²⁸ Jeaffreson, *The Real Lord Byron*, II, p. 186, says that Byron through Shelley's mediation could secure Hunt as editor.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, II, p. 626.

³⁰ *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*, p. 157.

³¹ See p. 103.

Moore "heard." The suggestions of both are open to doubt. Byron was most assuredly the projector of *The Liberal* and did not "consent to join Leigh Hunt and others." Besides, granting that Trelawney's opinion was based on a statement of Byron's, even that would not be convincing, since Byron made a number of mis-statements about the matter after he grew weary of it. Questionable as the assertion is, it has been made the basis of accusations against Hunt of deliberate deceit and of breach of contract. Had it been true that there was an understanding of coöperation between the two papers, Byron and Moore would have made much of the charge. Trelawney's opinion, first noticed by *Blackwood's* in March, 1828, has been elaborated by Jeaffreson,³² and accepted by Leslie Stephen³³ and Kent.³⁴ Elze, who seems to have labored under the impression that Harold Skimpole was a faithful portrait-ure of Hunt, states that his connection with Byron began with a falsehood.³⁵ R. B. Johnson says, in defense of Hunt, that the accusation "is quite unreasonable and contrary to all the evidence."³⁶ Monkhouse thinks that it is doubtful if Byron reckoned on the support of the London paper.³⁷ J. Ashcroft Noble says that Byron had much to say about the Hunts in his letters, "and made the most of all kinds of trivial or imaginary grievances; it is simply incredible that had a grievance of such reality and magnitude as this really existed he would have refrained from mentioning it." As proof against it, he quotes Byron's belief in Hunt's honesty as late as September 1822; and he points out the "obvious absurdity of the idea that in the year 1822 a weekly newspaper could be conducted successfully, or at all, by an editor in Pisa or Genoa."³⁸ The strong probability, gathered from all the extant evidence, is that Byron and Shelley, in inviting Hunt to Italy, expected, and very naturally, that he would continue to share in the profits of *The Examiner*. Shelley, indeed, in a letter dated

³² *The Real Lord Byron*, II, p. 186.

³³ *Dictionary of National Biography*.

³⁴ *Leigh Hunt as Poet and Essayist*, p. 30.

³⁵ *Life of Byron*, pp. 266-267.

³⁶ *Leigh Hunt*, p. 37, note.

³⁷ *Life of Leigh Hunt*, p. 154.

³⁸ *The Sonnet in England*, pp. 118-119.

as late as January 25, 1822, urged Hunt not to leave England without a regular income from that journal³⁹—an injunction which Hunt unfairly disregarded. It is also likely that his connection with *The Examiner* was one of Byron's reasons in extending the partnership to include Hunt. But it is practically certain that there was no contract nor even understanding as regards the coöperation of *The Liberal* and the London paper. The question does not therefore, involve Hunt's honor at all. If Byron expected to profit by the influence of *The Examiner*, his silence shows a manliness that Noble does not credit him with.

Hunt, in accepting Byron's offer, was actuated by motives both selfish and unselfish. The fine of £1,000 imposed at the time of his conviction of libel was not all paid; *The Indicator* had been abandoned; *The Examiner* was on its last legs; his health was broken by overwork undertaken in the effort not to call upon his friends for aid;⁴⁰ an invalid wife and seven children were to be supported by his pen; his brother John was in prison. From January, 1821, to August of the same year he had been unable to write. In accepting Byron's offer he thought to recover his health in a southern climate, to regain his political influence which had been on the decrease during the last four or five years, and at the same time to aid aggressively the liberal movement.⁴¹ Moreover, he was flattered immensely by the prospective public association with Lord Byron. He had little to lose and a prospect of large gain. Hunt should have weighed more gravely such a step before he embarked on such a hazardous venture with so large a family, but, with a buoyancy and irresponsibility in practical affairs peculiar to himself, he clutched at the new proposition as a way out of all difficulties and did not look beyond immediate necessities. He pictured himself and his family healthy and wealthy in a land he had always sighed for. If the skies lowered, he fancied Shelley always at hand. His description of preparations for the voyage is as airy as his pocketbook was light: "My family, therefore, packed up such goods and

³⁹ *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 255.

⁴⁰ *Correspondence I*, p. 161.

⁴¹ *Autobiography*, II, p. 59.

chattels as they had a regard for, my books in particular, and we took, with strange new thoughts and feelings, but in high expectation, our journey by sea."⁴²

The part Shelley played in the invitation to Hunt is more difficult of interpretation. The original proposition to become an equal partner in the transaction he never seriously entertained. He consented to become a contributor only. His reasons for his refusal he gave to others, but, for fear of endangering Hunt's prospects, withheld from Byron; for the same reason he dissembled at times concerning his real feelings. Yet he was equally responsible with Byron in extending the invitation to Hunt, as will be shown later. Although Shelley could not have foreseen the full consequences of such a course of action, he was deficient in frankness toward Byron and undoubtedly sacrificed him somewhat in the transaction to his affection for Hunt. While Byron continued to hold the highest opinion of Shelley, between the time of their meeting in Switzerland and at Ravenna, Shelley had experienced three separate revulsions of feeling.⁴³ At the time in question his distrust had returned.

⁴² *Autobiography*, II, p. 59.

⁴³ After Shelley's meeting with Byron in Switzerland in 1816, before they met again in Venice, there had been a lapse of two years bridged only by a not always pleasant correspondence relating to Allegra, Byron's natural daughter. Shelley occupied the unenviable position of mediator between him and Jane Clairmont, the child's mother. Yet when the two men met again in August, 1818, it was at first on the terms recorded in *Julian and Maddalo*. Byron's influence served as a stimulus to this and to other poems of the same period. By December of that year Shelley's opinion of Byron had changed; on the 22d, he wrote to Peacock of *Childe Harold* in terms that show how quickly his views could alter: "The spirit in which it is written, is, if insane, the most wicked and mischievous insanity that was ever given forth. It is a kind of obstinate and self-willed folly, in which he hardens himself. I remonstrated with him in vain on the tone of mind from which such a view of things alone arises. . . . He (Byron) associates with wretches who seem to have lost the gait and physiognomy of man, and who do not scruple to avow practices, which are not only not named, but I believe seldom even conceived in England. He says he disapproves, but he endures. He is heartily and deeply discontented with himself; and contemplating in the distorted mirror of his own thoughts the nature and destiny of man, what

Hunt's pecuniary troubles made their relations still more difficult. This state of affairs between Byron and Shelley must have given Hunt great concern, and Shelley suspecting his

can he behold but objects of contempt and despair? But that he is a great poet, I think the address to Ocean proves. And he has a certain degree of candour while you talk to him, but unfortunately it does not outlast your departure. No, I do not doubt, and for his own sake, I ought to hope, that his present career must soon end in some violent circumstance." (*Works of Shelley*, VIII, pp. 80-81.)

From the close of 1818 until 1821, they were again separated. Their correspondence, as previously, related chiefly to Allegra and was of a still less agreeable nature. Byron had refused to deal directly with Jane Clairmont and all communications had to pass through Shelley's hands. In the interval, as though in retaliation, Byron had believed the Shiloh story, a fabrication by a nurse of the Shelleys that Jane Clairmont was Shelley's mistress, but he does not seem to have condemned such a state of affairs. (*Letters and Journals*, V, p. 86, October, 1820.) Yet he testified in his letters his great admiration of Shelley's poetry (*Ibid.*, VI, p. 387), and after his death he called him "The best and least selfish man I ever knew." (*Ibid.*, VI, p. 98; August 3, 1822.) But before 1821, a reversal of the opinion formed in Shelley's mind at the time of Byron's Venetian excesses, came about. November 11, 1820, he wrote to Mrs. Hunt: "His indecencies, too, both against sexual nature, and against human nature in general, sit very awkwardly upon him. He only affects the libertine; he is, really, a very amiable, friendly and agreeable man, I hear." (Hunt, *Correspondence*, I, p. 139.) This corroborates Thornton Hunt's statement that Byron had risen in Shelley's estimation before 1821 and that otherwise *The Liberal* would never have been started. (*Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1863.)

At Byron's invitation they met again in Ravenna. Shelley's letters dated from there show unstinted admiration of Byron's genius and of the man himself. He wrote in August, 1821, that he was living a "life totally the reverse of that which he led at Venice. . . . (*Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 211, August 7, 1821.) L. B. is greatly improved in every respect. In genius, in temper, in moral views, in health, in happiness. . . . He has had mischievous passions, but these he seems to have subdued, and he is becoming what he should be, a virtuous man. . . . (*Ibid.*, VIII, p. 217, August 10, 1821.) Lord Byron and I are excellent friends, and were I reduced to poverty, or were I a writer who had no claims to a higher station than I possess—or did I possess a higher than I deserve, we should appear in all things as such, and I would freely ask him any favour. Such is not now the case. The daemon of mistrust and pride lurks between two persons in our station, poisoning the freedom of our intercourse. This is a tax and a heavy one, which we must pay for being human." Of *Don Juan* he wrote: "It sets him not only above,

distress wrote March 2, 1822: "The aspect of affairs has somewhat changed since the date of that in which I expressed a repugnance to a continuance of intimacy with Lord Byron as close as that which now exists; at least it has changed so far as regards you and the intended journal."⁴⁴

In January, 1821, Mrs. Hunt wrote Mary Shelley, begging

but far above, all the poets of the day—every word is stamped with immortality. I despair of rivalling Lord Byron, as well I may, and there is no other with whom it is worth contending. (*Ibid.*, VIII, p. 219, August 10, 1821.) During the visit Shelley served as ambassador to the Countess Guiccioli in persuading her not to go to Switzerland, and in the same capacity to Byron in the arrangement of Allegra's affairs. It was then settled that Byron should reside for the winter at Pisa. Shelley had misgivings about such an arrangement on his own and on Miss Clairmont's account, for he had previously intended to settle in the same vicinity. He finally decided not to let it make any difference in his plans. In January, 1822, Shelley wrote from Pisa to Peacock: "Lord Byron is established here, and we are his constant companions. No small relief this, after the dreary solitude of the understanding and the imagination in which we passed the first years of our expatriation, yoked to all sorts of miseries and discomforts. . . . if you before thought him a great poet, what is your opinion now that you have read *Cain*?" (*Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 249; January 11, 1822.) During the same month he wrote to John Gisborne: "What think you of Lord Byron now? Space wondered less at the swift and fair creations of God, when he grew weary of vacancy, than I at this spirit of an angel in the mortal paradise of a decaying body." (*Ibid.*, VIII, p. 251, January, 1822.)

A letter to Leigh Hunt gives the first intimation of the return of the ill-feeling toward Byron: "Past circumstances between Lord B. and me render it impossible that I should accept any supply from him for my own use, or that I should ask for yours if the contribution could be supposed in any manner to relieve me, or to do what I could otherwise have done." (*Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 253, January 25, 1822.) This referred to more entanglements with Byron about Allegra. Shelley wrote to Jane Clairmont: "It is of vital importance, both to me and yourself, to Allegra even, that I should put a period to my intimacy with Lord Byron, and that without éclat. No sentiments of honour and of justice restrain him (as I strongly suspect) from the basest suspicion, and the only mode in which I could effectually silence him I am reluctant (even if I had proof) to employ during my father's life. But for your immediate feelings, I would suddenly and irrevocably leave the country which he inhabits, nor even enter it but as an enemy to determine our differences without words." (*The Nation*, XLVIII, p. 116.)

⁴⁴ *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 258.

that they might come to Italy. The subject was thus revived and a formal invitation was conveyed in a letter of August 26, 1821, from Shelley to Hunt. It proves beyond a doubt that Byron was the chief projector of the journal:

"He (Byron) proposes that you should come out and go shares with him and me, in a periodical work, to be conducted here; in which each of the contracting parties should publish all their original compositions and share the profits. . . . There can be no doubt that the *profits* of any scheme in which you and Lord Byron engage, must, from various, yet co-operating reasons, be very great. As for myself, I am, for the present, only a sort of link between you and him, until you can know each other and effectuate the arrangement; since (to entrust you with a secret which, for your sake, I withhold from Lord Byron), nothing would induce me to share in the profits, and still less, in the borrowed splendor of such a partnership. You and he, in different manners, would be equal, and would bring, in a different manner, but in the same proportion, equal stocks of reputation and success. . . . I did not ask Lord Byron to assist me in sending a remittance for your journey; because there are men, however excellent, from whom we would never receive an obligation, in the worldly sense of the word; and I am as jealous for my friend as for myself. . . . He has many generous and exalted qualities, but the canker of aristocracy wants to be cut out."⁴⁵

Hunt's answer was full of expectation and hope. He wrote that "Are there not three of us? . . . We will divide the world between us, like the Triumvirate, and you shall be the sleeping partner, if you will."⁴⁶ To Shelley's reply of October 6, thanking him for coming, Hunt answered: "You say, Shelley, you thank me for coming. The pleasure of being obliged by those we love is so great that I do not wonder that you continue to muster up some obligation to me, but if you are obliged, how much am I?"⁴⁷

From the beginning of the enterprise Thomas Moore and John Murray scented trouble and made more. They continued their intermeddling after *The Liberal* was launched, and doubtless ministered to Byron's vacillation. Hunt and Murray had disagreed over the *Story of Rimini*⁴⁸ and an attack on Southey in *The Examiner* of May 11 and 18, 1817, had in-

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 235, August 26, 1821.

⁴⁶ *Correspondence*, I, p. 172, September 21, 1821.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 174, November 16, 1821.

⁴⁸ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, IV, p. 129, June 4, 1817.

cluded Murray as well. Moreover, Murray saw in John Hunt,⁴⁹ the publisher of the new periodical, a dangerous future rival in his business relations with Byron. After matters became unpleasant in Italy, Murray took his revenge by making public Byron's letters containing ill-natured remarks about Hunt.⁵⁰ The relations of Moore and Hunt had been very friendly⁵¹ but at this juncture both became too proud of having a "noble lord" for a friend.⁵²

Moore, writing to Byron in the latter part of 1821, said: "I heard some time ago that Leigh Hunt was on his way to Genoa with all of his family; and the idea seems to be, that you and Shelley and he are to *conspire* together in *The Examiner*. I cannot believe this—and deprecate such a plan with all my might. *Alone* you may do anything, but partnerships in fame, like those in trade, make the strongest party answerable for the deficiencies or delinquencies of the rest, and I tremble even for *you* with such a bankrupt company. . . . They are both clever fellows, and Shelley I look upon as a man of real genius; but, I must say again, you could not give your enemies (the . . . s 'et hoc genus omne') a greater triumph than by joining such an unequal and unholy alliance,"⁵³ an astounding statement from a man of pronounced liberal views. Byron's answer of January 24 was indefinite and perhaps intentionally misleading: "Be assured that there is no such coalition as you apprehend."⁵⁴ February 19, Moore advised Byron not

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, VI, pp. 117, 122, 127, 129, 134, 138, 158.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 156.

⁵¹ In 1814 Moore showed considerable pride in being included as one of the four poets to sup with Apollo in the *Feast of the Poets* and said that he was "particularly flattered by praise from Hunt, because he is one of the most honest and candid men" that he knew. (*Memoirs, Journal and Correspondence*, II, p. 159.) In 1819 Hunt had urged upon Perry, the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, the necessity of a public subscription for Moore. (*Ibid.*, II, p. 340). An unfavorable review of Moore's political principles in *The Examiner* during the same year may have done something to bring about the change in Moore's feelings, though he was eulogized in a later issue of January 21, 1821.

⁵² B. W. Procter, *An Autobiographical Fragment*, p. 153.

⁵³ *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, II, p. 583.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, II, p. 582.

to discuss religious matters in the new work, but to confine himself to political theories; "if you have any political catamarans to explode this (London) is your place."⁵⁵ After *The Liberal* was begun, Moore wrote: "It grieves me to urge anything so much against Hunt's interest, but I should not hesitate to use the same language to himself were I near him. I would, if I were you, serve him in every possible way but this—I would give him (if he would accept of it) the profits of the same works, published separately—but I would not mix myself up in this way with others. I would not become a partner in this sort of miscellaneous '*pot au feu*' where the bad flavour of one ingredient is sure to taint all the rest. I would be, if I were *you*, alone, single-handed and as such, invincible."⁵⁶

The Hunts started for Italy November 15, 1821, but on account of various setbacks and delays did not really leave the coast of England until May 13, 1822. In the ten months which elapsed between the invitation to Hunt and his arrival, it is not surprising that Byron's enthusiasm had cooled. He would have withdrawn if he could have done so, although Byron, Trelawny says, was at first more eager than Shelley for Hunt's arrival.⁵⁷ As has already been stated above, affairs between Byron and Shelley had been very strained in January. In the letter of March 2, already referred to, Shelley informed Hunt that matters had improved between Byron and himself and that Byron expressed the "greatest eagerness to proceed with the journal, he dilates with impatience on the delay, and he disregards the opinion of those who have advised him against it."

Shelley thought that their strained relations would in no way interfere with Hunt's prospects, and, with what looks a little like double-dealing, that it would be possible for him to preserve what influence he had over the "Proteus" until Hunt arrived: "It will be no very difficult task to execute that you have assigned me—to keep him in heart with the project

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, II, p. 584.

⁵⁶ Jeaffreson, *The Real Lord Byron*, II, p. 188.

⁵⁷ *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*, p. 111.

until your arrival.”⁵⁸ April 10, Shelley wrote again to Hunt of Byron’s eagerness for his arrival: “he urges me to press you to depart.” But a reference to the state of affairs in the two households in Italy carries a foreboding note: “Lord Byron has made me bitterly feel the inferiority which the world has presumed to place between us, and which subsists nowhere in reality but in our own talents, which are not our own but Nature’s—or in our rank, which is not our own but Fortune’s.” With his usual humility, Shelley closes the letter with an apology for carrying his jealousy of Byron into Hunt’s relations with him, and says: “You in the superiority of a wise and tranquil nature have well corrected and justly re-proved me . . . you will find much in me to correct and re-prove.”⁵⁹ During the summer Shelley continued to shrink more than ever from Byron; June 18 he declared to Hunt that he would not be the link between them for Byron is the “nucleus of all that is hateful.” His one dread was that he might injure Hunt’s prospects.⁶⁰ Between April and July Byron’s enthusiasm had again cooled. Trelawny relates that Shelley when he went to Leghorn to meet Hunt, was greatly depressed by Lord Byron’s “shuffling and equivocating,” and, “but for imperilling Hunt’s prospects,” that Shelley would have abruptly terminated their intercourse.⁶¹ On July 4 Shelley wrote to Mary from Pisa that “things are in the worst possible situation with respect to poor Hunt. . . . Lord Byron must of course furnish the requisite funds at present, as I cannot, but he seems inclined to depart without the necessary explanations and arrangements due to such a situation as Hunt’s. These, in spite of delicacy, I must procure.”⁶² This dual attitude of Shelley has been variously viewed. Professor Dowden thinks it a “triumph of diplomacy,”⁶³ while Jeaffreson deems it a conspiracy of Hunt and Shelley against the innocent and unsuspecting Byron.

⁵⁸ Nicoll, *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 353, March, 1822.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁶⁰ *Fortnightly*, XXIX, p. 850.

⁶¹ *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*, p. 112.

⁶² *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 288–289.

⁶³ *Life of Shelley*, II, p. 459.

Hunt gave the following ominous description of his first call upon Lord Byron: "The day was very hot; the road to Mount Nero was very hot, through dusty suburbs; and when I got there I found the hottest looking house I ever saw. It was salmon colour. Think of this, flaring over the country in a hot Italian sun! But the greatest of all the heats was within. Upon seeing Lord Byron, I hardly knew him, he was grown so fat; and he was longer in recognizing me, I had grown so thin."⁶⁴ Hunt wrote to England that Byron received him with marked cordiality⁶⁵ but Shelley's friend Williams, in his last letter to his wife, stated that Byron treated Hunt vilely and "actually said as much that he did not wish his name to be attached to the work, and of course to theirs"; that his treatment of Mrs. Hunt was "most shameful"; and that his "conduct cut H. to the soul."⁶⁶ The Hunt family was quickly quartered on the ground floor of Byron's palace, which Byron had furnished at a cost of £60.⁶⁷ Shelley's sensible suggestions to Hunt about his furniture,⁶⁸ about the income from *The Examiner*, and worse still, his delicately given advice that it was not possible for him to bring *all* of his family, had been ignored.⁶⁹

With Shelley's tragic death a few days after their arrival, the only "link of the two thunderbolts,"⁷⁰ as he had called himself, was broken. Hunt was left in an awkward position which no one could have foreseen. A few days later he wrote to friends at home of Byron's kindness.⁷¹ In 1828 he gave a different version:

"Lord Byron requested me to look upon him as standing in Mr. S.'s place. My heart died within me to hear him; I made the proper acknowledgment, but I knew what he meant, and I more than doubted whether even in that, the most trivial part of the friendship, he could resemble Mr. Shelley, if

⁶⁴ *Autobiography*, II, p. 94.

⁶⁵ *Correspondence*, I, p. 86.

⁶⁶ Monkhouse, *Life of Leigh Hunt*, p. 156.

⁶⁷ Hunt refuted the statement that Byron had walled off part of his dwelling and furnished it handsomely. (*Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 14 ff.)

⁶⁸ *Works of Shelley*, VIII, pp. 242, 253.

⁶⁹ Nicoll and Wise, *Literary Anecdotes of the Nineteenth Century*, p. 342, December 22, 1818.

⁷⁰ *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 286. ⁷¹ *Correspondence*, I, p. 190.

he would. Circumstances unfortunately rendered the matter of too much importance to me at the moment. I had reason to fear:—I was compelled to try:—and things turned out as I had dreaded. The public have been given to understand that Lord Byron's purse was at my command, and that I used it according to the spirit with which it was offered. *I did so*. Stern necessity and a family compelled me."⁷²

With the magazine scarcely likely to yield an income for some time, it was absolutely necessary for Hunt to get money from somewhere for living expenses and, Shelley gone, there was no one left to tide over the interval but Byron. The latter did not relish the position of sole banker to a family of nine and doled out £70 in small doses through his steward, Hunt says, just as if his "disgraces were being counted."⁷³ He was embittered by his position as suppliant and dependent, though there is nothing to show that he was ever refused what he asked for or requested to pay back what he owed.⁷⁴

Hunt's entire money obligation to Byron has been comprehensively calculated by Galt at £500: £200 for the journey from England, £70 at Pisa for living expenses, the cost of the journey from Pisa to Genoa, and £30 from Genoa to Florence. Galt thought the use of the ground floor a small favor since Byron could use only one floor for himself. Such practices were very common, Italian palaces often being built for that purpose.⁷⁵ It is likely that until the step was irrevocable Byron did not correctly gauge Hunt's resources and the responsibility which he was assuming in transporting a large family to a foreign country. If he did, he expected to share the burden with Shelley. Had Hunt been financially independent, it is probable that he and Byron would have remained on amicable enough terms, for the former asserts that the first time he was treated with disrespect was when Byron knew he was in want.⁷⁶ Yet that neither Shelley nor Byron were wholly ignorant of what to expect before Hunt's arrival in Italy is apparent from Shelley's letter to Byron, February 15, 1822:

⁷² *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 18.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁴ "I could always procure what I wanted from Lord Byron, and living here is divinely cheap." (*Correspondence*, I, p. 198, November 7, 1822.)

⁷⁵ *Life of Byron*, p. 242.

⁷⁶ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 6.

"Hunt had urged me more than once to ask you to lend him this money. My answer consisted in sending him all I could spare, which I have now literally done. Your kindness in fitting up a part of your own home for his accommodation I sensibly felt, and willingly accept from you on his part, but, believe me, without the slightest intention of imposing, or, if I could help it, of allowing to be imposed, any heavier task on your purse. As it has come to this in spite of my exertions, I will not conceal from you the low ebb of my own money affairs in the present moment,—that is, my absolute incapacity of assisting Hunt further. I do not think poor Hunt's promise to pay in a given time is worth very much, but mine is less subject to uncertainty, and I should be happy to be responsible for any engagement he may have proposed to you."⁷⁷

Mrs. Hunt seems to have widened further the breach between the two men.⁷⁸ She did not speak Italian and the Countess Guiccioli, the head of Byron's establishment, did not speak English. Neither made any linguistic efforts and consequently there was no intercourse between the families of the two households. This, Hunt later says, was the first cause of diminished cordiality between Byron and himself. The Hunt children were a further cause of trouble. Byron wrote of them to Mrs. Shelley: "They were dirtier and more mischievous than Yahoos. What they can't destroy with their feet they will with their fingers."⁷⁹ Again he described them as "six little blackguards . . . kraal out of the Hottentot country."⁸⁰

The question of rank was a thorn in the flesh, particularly to Hunt. While in open theory he had no respect for titles,

⁷⁷ *Works of Shelley*, VIII, p. 257.

⁷⁸ She used no tact in her dealings with Lord Byron. She let him see that she had no respect for rank or titles. She even went beyond the limits of courtesy in her remarks to him. On Byron's saying, "What do you think, Mrs. Hunt? Trelawny had been speaking of my morals! What do you think of that?" "It is the first time," said Mrs. Hunt, "I ever heard of them." (*Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 27). Of his portrait by Harlowe she said "that it resembled a great schoolboy, who had had a plain bun given him, instead of a plum one," a facetious speech indiscreetly repeated by Hunt to Byron.

⁷⁹ *Letters and Journals*, VI, p. 124.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, VI, pp. 119-120. Hunt's view was quite different. Byron was, he thought, intimidated "out of his reasoning" by his children and their principles. (*Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 28.)

in actual practice he groveled before them. Pride, as he thought, had made him decline all advances from men of rank, but it was more with the air of being afraid to trust himself than with real indifference. His exception, made in the case of Lord Byron, is thus explained: "But talents, poetry, similarity of political opinion, flattery of early sympathy with my boyish writings, more flattering offers of friendship and the last climax of flattery, an earnest waiving of his rank, were too much for me in the person of Lord Byron."⁸¹ On the renewal of the acquaintance in Italy, the very familiar attitude seen in the dedication of the *Story of Rimini*, which Hunt himself had decided was "foolish," was changed at the advice of Shelley to an extremely formal manner of address. Hunt says that Byron did not like the change.⁸² As a matter of fact, six years of separation had brought about other more important changes: Byron had grown more selfish and avaricious, Hunt more helpless and vain.

Three months were spent in Pisa after Shelley's death. In September the two families left for Genoa, travelling in separate parties and, on their arrival, settling in separate homes, the Hunts with Mrs. Shelley. From this time on there was little intercourse between Byron and Hunt. October 9, 1822, Byron wrote to England and denied that all three families were living under one roof. He said that he rarely saw Hunt, not more than once a month.⁸³ Hunt to the contrary said that they saw less of each other than in Genoa yet "considerable."⁸⁴ Although at no time was there an open breach, yet cordiality and sympathy were wholly lost on both sides in the strain of the financial situation. They failed of agreement even on impersonal matters. Byron had looked forward with great pleasure to Hunt's companionship. Before they met he had written: "When Leigh Hunt comes we shall have banter enough about those old *ruffiani*, the old dramatists, with their tiresome conceits, their jingling rhymes, and endless play upon

⁸¹ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 32.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁸³ *Letters and Journals*, VI, pp. 157, 167.

⁸⁴ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 64.

words.”⁸⁵ This pleasant anticipation was not realized, for Hunt’s sensitiveness in petty matters and Byron’s scorn of Hunt’s affectation and of his ill-bred personal applications,⁸⁶ or so the hearer interpreted them, reduced safe topics to Boswell’s *Life of Johnson*. Even a mutual admiration of Pope and Dryden was forgotten. Literary jealousy and vanity fed the flames. Hunt was unable to appreciate manhood of Byron’s virile type, and he did not try to conceal the fact from one who was hungry for praise. On the other hand, Byron did not render to Hunt the homage he was accustomed to receive from the Cockney circle and had nothing but contempt for all his works except the *Story of Rimini*. A statement in the anonymous *Life of Lord Byron*, published by Iley, that the misunderstanding was the result of a criticism by Hunt of *Parisina* in the Leghorn and Lucca newspapers and that Byron never spoke to him after the discovery⁸⁷ is a fabrication as unsubstantial as the greater part of the other statements in the same book. Hunt denied the charge. His sole connection with *Parisina* was that he supplied the incident of the heroine talking in her sleep,⁸⁸ a device that he had already made use of in *Rimini*.

On his arrival in Italy Hunt wrote back to England that Byron entered into *The Liberal* with great ardor, and that he had presented the *Vision of Judgment* to his brother and himself for their mutual benefit.⁸⁹ Yet four days later in a letter to Moore Byron wrote: “Hunt seems sanguine about the matter but (*entre nous*) I am not. I do not, however, like to put him out of spirits by saying so, for he is bilious and unwell. Do, pray, answer *this* letter immediately. Do send Hunt anything in prose or verse of yours, to start him handsomely—and lyrical, *irical*, or what you please.”⁹⁰ At the time of Trelawny’s first visit after the work had begun, Byron said impatiently: “It will be an abortion,” and again in Trelawny’s presence he called to his bull-dog on the stairway, “Don’t

⁸⁵ Medwin, *Conversations of Lord Byron*, p. 58.

⁸⁶ Monkhouse, *Life of Leigh Hunt*, pp. 64-65.

⁸⁷ II, pp. 145-146.

⁸⁸ *Autobiography*, II, p. 24.

⁸⁹ *Correspondence*, I, p. 188, July 8, 1822. Letter to his sister-in-law.

⁹⁰ *Letters and Journals*, VI, p. 97, July 12, 1822.

let any Cockneys pass this way.”⁹¹ Sometime previous to October his endurance must have given way completely, for in that month Hunt wrote that Byron was *again* for the plan.⁹² In January Byron urged John Hunt to employ good writers for *The Liberal* that it might succeed.⁹³ March 17, 1823, Byron, in a letter to John Hunt, said that he attributed the failure of *The Liberal* to his own contributions and that the magazine would stand a better chance without him. He desired to sever the partnership if the magazine was to be continued.⁹⁴ His constant vacillation in part supports the charge made by Hunt that Byron under protest contributed his worse productions in order to make a show of coöperation.⁹⁵ Insinuations from Moore and Murray had fallen on fertile ground and had persuaded Byron that the association jeopardized his reputation. Hobhouse, Byron’s friend, joined his dissenting voice to theirs, and “rushed over the Alps” to add to his disapproval.⁹⁶ Hazlitt’s account of the conspiracy of Byron’s friends against *The Liberal* is very fiery.⁹⁷

⁹¹ *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*, I, p. 174.

⁹² *Correspondence*, I, p. 192. October (?), 1822.

⁹³ *Letters and Journals*, VI, p. 160. January 8, 1823.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, VI, pp. 171-173.

⁹⁵ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, pp. 50, 63.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁹⁷ “*Blackwood’s Magazine* overflowed, as might be expected, with ten-fold gall and bitterness; the *John Bull* was outrageous; and Mr. Jerdan black in the face at this unheard-of and disgraceful union. But who would have supposed that Mr. Thomas Moore and Mr. Hobhouse, those staunch friends and partisans of the people, should also be thrown into almost hysterical agonies of well-bred horror at the coalition between their noble and ignoble acquaintance, between the Patrician and the ‘Newspaper-Man’? Mr. Moore darted backwards and forwards from Cold-Bath-Fields’ Prison to the Examiner-Office, from Mr. Longman’s to Mr. Murray’s shop, in a state of ridiculous trepidation, to see what was to be done to prevent this degradation of the aristocracy of letters, this indecent encroachment of plebeian pretensions, this undue extension of patronage and compromise of privilege. The Tories were shocked that Lord Byron should grace the popular side by his direct countenance and assistance—the Whigs were shocked that he should share his confidence and councils with any one who did not unite the double recommendations of birth and genius—but themselves!” (Hazlitt, *The Plain Speaker*, II, p. 437 ff.)

The first number of *The Liberal* appeared October 15, 1822. There were three subsequent numbers. Byron's contributions were his brilliant and masterly satire, the *Vision of Judgment, Heaven and Earth, A Letter to the Editor of my Grandmother's Review, The Blues*, and his translation of the first canto of Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore*. Murray had withheld the preface to the *Vision of Judgment* and this omission, combined with an unwise announcement in *The Examiner* of September 29, 1822, by John Hunt, made the reception even worse than it might otherwise have been. Hunt said the *Vision of Judgment* "played the devil with all of us."⁹⁸ Shelley had made ready for the forthcoming magazine his exquisite translation of Goethe's *May Day Night* and a prose narrative, *A German Apologue*. These appeared in the first number. Hunt's best contributions were two poems, *Lines to a Spider* and *Mahmoud*. *Letters from Abroad* are good in spots only. His two satires, *The Dogs* and *The Book of Beginners*, are pale reflections in meter and tone of *Don Juan* and *Beppo* combined. The *Florentine Lovers* is a good story spoiled. *Rhyme and Reason, The Guili Tre*, and the rest are purely hack work, with the possible exceptions of the translation from Ariosto and the modernization of the *Squire's Tale*. Hazlitt contributed *Pulpit Oratory, On the Spirit of Monarchy*, a pithy dissertation *On the Scotch Character*, and a delightful reminiscence of Coleridge in *My First Acquaintance with Poets*. Mrs. Shelley wrote *A Tale of the Passions, Mme. D'Houdetot*, and *Giovanni Villani*, all rather stilted and heavy. Charles Browne contributed *Shakspear's Fools*. A number of unidentified prose articles and poems, many of the latter translations from Alfieri, completed the list.

The causes of the failure of *The Liberal* were very complex, but quite obvious. There was no definite political campaign mapped out, no proportion outlined for the various departments, no assignments of individual responsibility, no attempt to cater to the public appetite or to mollify the public prejudices for expediency's sake, and an utter want of harmony among its supporters. Each contributor rode his own

⁹⁸ Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries, p. 52.

hobby. Each vented his private spleen without regard to the common good. It was a vague, up-in-the-air scheme, wholly lacking in coördination and common sense. Byron's fickleness and want of genuine interest in a small affair among many other greater ones; the disappointment of both Byron⁹⁹ and Hunt in not realizing the enormous profits that they had looked forward to—although Hunt wrote later that the "moderate profits" were quite enough to have encouraged perseverance on the part of Byron; Hunt's ill-health and unhappy situation which rendered it difficult for him to write; John Hunt's inexperience as a bookseller; the general unpopularity of the editor, the publisher, and the contributors; and last, the pent-up storm of rage from the press which greeted the first number of *The Liberal*,¹⁰⁰ were other reasons that contributed to its ultimate downfall. In seeking Hunt for the editor of such a venture, as Galt had pointed out,¹⁰¹ Byron had mistaken his political notoriety for solid literary reputation.

Hunt, notwithstanding his confession¹⁰² of an inability to write at his best and of his brother's inexperience, throws the burden of failure solely on Byron. He asserts that *The Liberal* had no enemies and, worst of all, that Byron when he foresaw hostility and failure, gave him and his brother the profits that they might carry the responsibility of an "ominous partnership"¹⁰³—a statement ungenerously distorted by bitter memories, for when John Hunt was prosecuted for the publication of the *Vision of Judgment*, Byron offered to stand trial in his stead. Neither does Hunt state that Byron's contributions were *gratis* and that the "moderate profits" enabled him and his brother to pay off some of their old debts.¹⁰⁴ Byron,

⁹⁹ Galt in his *Life of Byron* says: "Whether Mr. Hunt was or was not a fit co-partner for one of his Lordship's rank and celebrity, I do not undertake to judge; but every individual was good enough for that vile prostitution of his genius, to which in an unguarded hour, he submitted for money." (P. 244.)

¹⁰⁰ The *Literary Gazette* of October 19, 1822, was one of the notable opponents.

¹⁰¹ *Life of Byron*, p. 239.

¹⁰² *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 52.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁰⁴ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, VI, p. 183.

strong with the prescience of failure, likewise shifted the blame to other shoulders and with the aid of a strong imagination tried to persuade himself and his friends that the Hunts had projected the affair and that he had consented in an evil hour to engage in it;¹⁰⁵ that they were the cause of the failure; that his motives throughout had been philanthropic only in nature;¹⁰⁶ and that he was sacrificing himself for others. Such statements are inventions born of self-accusation and of self-defense. The worst that can be said of Byron from beginning to end of the affair is that he was not conscientious in his endeavors to make the journal a success; that, after it failed, he evaded financial responsibility by placing barriers of coldness and ungraciousness between Hunt and himself.

On October 9, 1822, he wrote to Moore that he had done all he could for Hunt "but in the affairs of this world he himself is a child";¹⁰⁷ "As it is, I will not quit them (the Hunts) in their adversity, though it should cost me my character, fame, money, and the usual et cetera. . . . Had their journal gone on well, and I could have aided to make it better for them, I should then have left them; after my safe pilotage off a lee shore, to make a prosperous voyage by themselves. As it is, I can't, or would not, if I could, leave them amidst the breakers. As to any community of feeling, thought, or opinions between L. H. and me, there is little or none; we meet rarely, hardly ever; but I think him a good-principled and able man."¹⁰⁸ . . . You would not have had me leave him in the street with his family, would you? And as to the other plan you mention, you forget how it would humiliate him—that his writings should be supposed to be dead weight! Think a moment—he is perhaps the vainest man on earth, at least his own friends say so pretty loudly; and if he were in other circumstances I might be tempted to take him down a peg; but not now—it would be cruel.¹⁰⁹ . . . A more amiable man in

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 124.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 174, p. 182. (Letters to Mrs. Shelley.)

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 124.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, V., p. 157, December 25, 1822

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, VI, pp. 167–168.

society I know not, nor (when he will allow his sense to prevail over his sectarian principles) a better writer. When he was writing his *Rimini* I was not the last to discover its beauties, long before it was published. Even then I remonstrated against its vulgarisms; which are the more extraordinary, because the author is anything but a vulgar man."¹¹⁰ During April, 1823, the Countess of Blessington had a conversation with Byron in which he said that while he regretted having embarked in *The Liberal*, yet he had a good opinion of the talents and principles of Hunt, despite their diametrically opposed tastes.¹¹¹ On April 2, 1823, he wrote that Hunt was incapable or unwilling to help himself; that he could not keep up this "genuine philanthropy" permanently; and that he would furnish Hunt with the means to return to England in comfort."¹¹² There is no proof that Byron ever made such an offer to Hunt. The purchase money of Hunt's journey home was *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*. On July 23, 1823, Byron went to Greece. The Hunts, provided by him with £30 for the trip, left Genoa about the same time for Florence, where they were literally stranded, in ill-health and without sufficient means for support,¹¹³ until their departure for England in September, 1825. The suffering there and the foul calumny at home magnified in Hunt's mind¹¹⁴ the indignity and injustice that had been put upon him and warped his sense of gratitude and honor in the whole affair. He wrote from Florence: "The stiffness of age has come into my joints; my legs are sore and fevered; and I sometimes feel as if I were a ship rotting in a stagnant harbour."¹¹⁵ Mrs. Shelley protested to Byron concerning his treatment of Hunt¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, V, p. 588.

¹¹¹ Lady Blessington, *Conversations of Lord Byron*, p. 77.

¹¹² *Letters and Journals*, VI, pp. 182-183, April 2, 1823.

¹¹³ Hunt's only means of support were the income from his contributions to *Colburn's New Monthly Magazine*, from the *Wishing Cap Papers* in *The Examiner*, and an annuity of £100. (*Correspondence*, I, p. 227.)

¹¹⁴ *Correspondence*, I, p. 233-234.

¹¹⁵ *Correspondence*, I, p. 228. See Hazlitt's account of Hunt in Italy given in a letter from Haydon to Miss Mitford. (*Haydon, Life, Letters and Table Talk*, pp. 223-225.)

¹¹⁶ Moore, *Memoirs*, IV, p. 220; V. p. 182.

but she received no further satisfaction than the statement that he had engaged in the journal for good-will and respect for Hunt solely.¹¹⁷

The publisher Colburn in 1825 made Hunt an advance of money for the return journey, to be repaid by a volume of selections from *his own writings preceded by a biographical sketch*.¹¹⁸ An irresistible longing for England and a crisis in the disagreement with John Hunt regarding the proprietary rights of *The Examiner* and the publication of the *Wishing Cap Papers* in that paper, made Hunt seize at the first opportunity by which he might return home. From Paris, on his way to England, he wrote: "If I delayed I might be pinned forever to a distance, like a fluttering bird to a wall, and so die in helpless yearning. I have been mistaken. During my strength my weakness perhaps, was only apparent; now that I am weaker, indignation has given a fillip to my strength."¹¹⁹ From his severance with *The Examiner* and the publication of *Bacchus in Tuscany* in 1825, Hunt was idle until 1828. Then, pressed by his obligation to Colburn and stung by the misrepresentations of the press regarding his relations with Byron in Italy, he scored even, as he thought, by producing *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, the blunder of his life and the one blot upon his honor. In addition to the part dealing with Byron, it contained autobiographical reminiscences and memoirs of Shelley, Keats, Moore, Lamb and others. It went rapidly through three editions. The body of the work is a discussion of the defects of Byron's character and a detailed analysis of his actions. In brief, he is charged with insincerity in the cause of liberty; an impatience of any despotism save his own; a vain pride of rank, although his friends were of humble origin; a "libelling all around" of friends; an ignorance of real love, consanguineous or sexual; coarseness in speaking of women or to them;¹²⁰ a voluptuous indolence; weak impulses; a habit of miscellaneous confidences and exag-

¹¹⁷ *Letters and Journals*, VI, p. 174, 1823.

¹¹⁸ *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, preface, p. 3.

¹¹⁹ Clarke, *Recollection of Writers*, p. 230.

¹²⁰ But compare Hunt's own remarks on p. 40.

geration; untruthfulness; susceptibility to influence; avarice even in his patriotism and debauchery; a willingness to receive petty obligations; jealousy of the great and small; no powers of conversation and a want of self-possession; bad temper and self-will; an inordinate desire for flattery; egotism and love of notoriety. More petty accusations are excess in his eating and drinking, though Hunt complains that Byron would not "drink like a lord"; his fondness for communicating unpleasant tidings; his inclination to the mock heroic; his effeminacy and old-womanish superstition; his easily-aroused suspicions; his imitateness in writing poetry; his slight knowledge of languages; his physical cowardice. The virtues of this monster, small in number and grudgingly allowed, were admitted to be good horsemanship, good looks, a delicate hand, amusing powers of mimicry, pleasantry in his cups, masterly swimming. Unfortunately these statements were usually damned with a "but" or "yet."

While it is now generally believed that many of the accusations made by Hunt were true,¹²¹ inasmuch as they are con-

¹²¹ The biographers of the two men have taken various attitudes toward the value of *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*. Galt says that the pains Hunt took to elaborate faults of Byron make one think Hunt was treated according to his deserts, and that the troubles he labored under may have caused him to misapprehend Byron's jocularly for sarcasm, and caprice for insolence. (*Life of Byron*, p. 260.) Garnett considers the book a "corrective of merely idealized estimates of Lord Byron," and its "reception more unfavorable than its deserts." (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Byron," Ninth Edition.) Nichol thinks that while the book was prompted by uncharitableness and egotism, Byron's faults were only slightly magnified: that the poetic insight, the cosmopolitan sympathy and courage of Hunt have given a view that nothing else could have done. (*Life of Byron*, p. 165.) R. B. Johnson thinks that it was a correct estimate written in self-justification. Undoubtedly it should not have come from Hunt, yet if it had not been written Hunt would not have been defended nor Byron so well known. He says there is "no reason to regret any part of the affair but the heated and persistent abuse with which one of the most sensitive and humane of men has been loaded on account of it." (*Leigh Hunt*, p. 50.) Noble says that "Byron's friends met unpleasant truths by still more unpleasant falsehoods." (*The Sonnet in England*, p. 115.) Alexander Ireland, says the book was the great blunder of Hunt's life, "ought not to have been written, far less published." (*Dictionary of National Biography*.)

firmed in large part by contemporary evidence, and as truthfulness was one of Hunt's dominant traits, yet, on the other hand, it is quite necessary to make large allowance for the point of view and the color given by prejudice and bitterness of spirit. That Hunt told only the truth does not justify the injury in the slightest, for he had slept under Byron's roof and eaten of his bread. The obligations conferred were not exactly those of benefactor to suppliant; they were perhaps no more than Hunt's due in the light of the responsibility voluntarily assumed by Byron; yet they could not be destroyed or forgotten because of a refusal to acknowledge them. Worse still, Hunt's motives proceeded from impecuniosity and revenge. Such petty gossip of private affairs was worthy of a smaller and meaner soul. That Hunt did not have the sanction of his own judgment and conscience is clearly seen in the preface to the first edition where he confesses an unwilling hand and gives as a reason for the change of scheme a too long holiday taken after the advance of money from Colburn. He says that the book would never have been written at all, or consigned to the flames when finished, if he could have repaid the money.¹²² His one poor defense is that "Byron talked freely of me and mine," that the public had talked, and that Byron knew how he felt.¹²³

The book had a very large circulation. But Hunt, who had hoped to defend himself in this manner from the calumnies afloat since the failure of *The Liberal*, brought down a storm of abuse from the press that resulted in his degradation and Byron's canonization. Moore's welcome was a poem, *The Living Dog and the Dead Lion*.¹²⁴ Hunt's friends replied with *The Giant and the Dwarf*.¹²⁵ In his life of Byron published some years later, Moore speaks reservedly of the book, merely saying it had sunk into deserved oblivion.¹²⁶

¹²² *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, p. 89.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

¹²⁴ Byron, *Letters and Journals*, II, p. 208.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, II, p. 461.

¹²⁶ Thornton Hunt, in his edition of his father's *Correspondence*, 1862, in this connection defended Byron, and credited him with "a strong sympathy with all that was beautiful and generous, with a desire to do right,

Hunt's public apology and reparation, in so far as such lay in his power, were first made in 1847 in *A Saunter Through the West End*: "No. 140 (formerly No. 13 of what was Piccadilly Terrace) was the last house which Byron inhabited in England. Nobody needs to be told what a great wit and fine poet he was: but everybody does not know that he was by nature a genial and generous man spoiled by the most untoward circumstances in early life. He vexed his enemies, and sometimes his friends; but his very advantages have been hard upon him, and subjected him to all sorts of temptations. May peace rest upon his infirmities, and his fame brighten as it advances."¹²⁷ In 1848, he wrote in praise of the Ave Maria stanza in *Don Juan*.¹²⁸ And finally and completely in his *Autobiography* he apologized for the heat and venom of *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*:

"I wrote nothing which I did not feel to be true, or think so. But I can say with Alamanni, that I was then a young man, and that I am now advanced in years. I can say, that I was agitated by grief and anger, and that I am now free from anger. I can say, that I was far more alive to other people's defects than to my own, and that I am now sufficiently sensible of my own to show to others the charity which I need myself. I can say, moreover, that apart from a little allowance for provocation, I do not think it right to exhibit what is amiss, or may be thought amiss, in the character of a fellow-creature, out of any feeling but unmistakable sorrow, or the wish to lessen evils which society itself may have caused.

"Lord Byron, with respect to the points on which he erred and suffered (for on all others, a man like himself, poet and wit, could not but give and receive pleasure), was the victim of a bad bringing up, of a series of false positions in society, of evils arising from the mistakes of society itself, of a personal disadvantage (which his feelings exaggerated), nay, of his very advantages of person, and of a face so handsome as to render with strong tendencies of natural affection," and declared that his fickleness had been "nurtured by an excessively bad training." In exoneration of Hunt he said that if "disappointment and the fervour of a new literary work—which often draws the pen beyond its original intention—led Leigh Hunt into a book that was too severe, perhaps too one-sided in its views, he himself afterwards corrected the one-sidedness, and recalled to mind the earlier and undoubtedly the more correct impression he had had of Lord Byron." I, 202–203.

¹²⁷ P. 14. For an apology made six years earlier see a letter from Hunt to Thomas Moore. (*Correspondence*, II, p. 38.)

¹²⁸ Hunt, *A Jar of Honey from Mt. Hybia*, p. 155.

him an object of admiration. Even the lameness, of which he had such a resentment, only softened the admiration with tenderness.

"But he did not begin life under good influences. He had a mother, herself, in all probability, the victim of bad training, who would fling the dishes from table at his head, and tell him he would be a scoundrel like his father. His father, who was cousin to the previous lord, had been what is called a man upon town, and was neither rich nor very respectable. The young lord, whose means had not yet recovered themselves, went to school, noble but poor, expecting to be in the ascendant with his title, yet kept down by the inconsistency of his condition. He left school to put on the cap with the gold tuft, which is worshipped at college:—he left college to fall into some of the worst hands on the town:—his first productions were contemptuously criticised, and his genius was thus provoked into satire:—his next were overpraised, which increased his self-love:—he married when his temper had been soured by difficulties, and his will and pleasure pampered by the sex:—and he went companionless into a foreign country, where all this perplexity could repose without being taught better, and where the sense of a lost popularity could be drowned in license.

"I am sorry I ever wrote a syllable respecting Lord Byron which might have been spared. I have still to relate my connection with him, but it will be related in a different manner. Pride, it is said, will have a fall; and I must own, that on this subject I have experienced the truth of the saying. I had prided myself—I should pride myself now if I had not been thus rebuked—on not being one of those who talk against others. I went counter to this feeling in a book; and to crown the absurdity of the contradiction, I am foolish enough to suppose that the very fact of my so doing would show that I had done it in no other instance! that having been thus public in the error, credit would be given me for never having been privately so! Such are the delusions inflicted on us by self-love. When the consequence was represented to me as characterized by my enemies, I felt, enemies though they were, as if I blushed from head to foot. It is true I had been goaded to the task by misrepresentation:—I had resisted every other species of temptation to do it:—and, after all, I said more in his excuse, and less to his disadvantage, than many of those who reproved me. But enough. I owed the acknowledgment to him and to myself; and I shall proceed on my course with a sigh for both, and I trust in the good will of the sincere."¹²⁹

¹²⁹ II, pp. 90-93.

CHAPTER V

Characteristics of the "Cockney School"—Reasons for Tory enmity—Establishment of *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review*—Their methods of attack—Other targets—Authorship of anonymous articles—Members of the Cockney group—Byron—Hunt—Keats—Shelley—Hazlitt.

The word "Cockney" says Bulwer-Lytton, signifies the "archetype of the Londoner east of Temple Bar, and is as grotesquely identified with the Bells of Bow as Quasimodo with those of Notre Dame."¹ The epithet remains doubtful in origin but is proverbially significant of odium and of ridicule. R. H. Horne asserts that, in its first application, it meant merely "pastoral, minus nature."² The word did not long carry so harmless a connotation. It was first applied to Hunt by the Tory journals in 1817 and, in the phrase "Cockney School," was gradually extended until it included most of his associates. The group of men thus arbitrarily banded together did not form a *school* or cult, and themselves resented such a classification. They differed widely in their fundamental principles of life and art. They were not all of one vocation. On the other hand they had certain superficial points in common which made them collectively vulnerable to the dart of the enemy. They were Londoners³ by birth or by adoption; with the exception of Shelley they may all be said to have belonged

¹ *Charles Lamb and Some of His Companions* in the *Quarterly Review* of January, 1867.

² *A New Spirit of the Age*, p. 182.

³ Near the close of his life Hunt wrote: "The jests about London and the Cockneys did not affect me in the least, as far as my faith was concerned. They might as well have said that Hampstead was not beautiful, or Richmond lovely; or that Chaucer and Milton were Cockneys when they went out of London to lie on the grass and look at the daisies. The Cockney School is the most illustrious in England; for, to say nothing of Pope and Gray, who were both veritable Cockneys, 'born within the sound of Bow Bell,' Milton was so too; and Chaucer and Spenser were both natives of the city. Of the four greatest English poets, Shakespeare only was not a Londoner." (*Autobiography*, II, p. 197.)

to the middle class; the most Cockneyfied of them had certain vulgar mannerisms; they egotistically paraded their personal affairs in public; they praised each other somewhat fulsomely in dedications and elsewhere, though not always to the full satisfaction of everybody concerned; they presented each other with wreaths of bay, laurel, and roses, and with locks of hair; they agreed in liking Thomas Moore and in disliking Southey; they moved with complacency within a limited circle to the exclusion of a large city; in general they were liberal in politics and in religion; they were in revolt against French criticism; they chose Elizabethan or Italian models, and, as a rule, they conceitedly ignored or contemned contemporary writers.

The gatherings of the coterie have been nowhere better described than by Cowden Clarke:

"Evenings of Mozartian operatic and chamber music at Vincent Novello's own house, where Leigh Hunt, Shelley, Keats and the Lambs were invited guests; the brilliant supper parties at the alternate dwellings of the Novellos, the Hunts and the Lambs, who had mutually agreed that bread and cheese, with celery, and Elia's immortalized 'Lutheran beer' were to be the sole cates provided; the meetings at the theatres, when Munden, Downton, Liston, Bannister, Elliston and Fanny Kelly were on the stage; the picnic repasts enjoyed together by appointment in the fields that lay spread in green breadth and luxuriance between the west end of Oxford Street and the western slope of Hampstead Hill—are things never to be forgotten."⁴

Miss Mitford relates a ludicrous incident of one of these meetings:

"Leigh Hunt (not the notorious Mr. Henry Hunt, but the fop, poet and politician of the 'Examiner') is a great keeper of birthdays. He was celebrating that of Haydn, the great composer—giving a dinner, crowning his bust with laurels, berhyming the poor dear German, and conducting an apotheosis in full form. Somebody told Mr. Haydon they were celebrating *his* birthday. So off he trotted to Hampstead, and bolted into the company—made a very fine animated speech—thanked him most sincerely for what they had done him and the arts in his person."⁵

⁴ *Recollections of Writers*, p. 19. Other accounts of these suppers are to be found in Hazlitt's *On the Conversations of Authors*; in the works dealing with Charles Lamb; and in the *Cornhill Magazine*, November, 1900.

⁵ *The Life of Mary Russell Mitford*. Edited by A. J. K. L'Estrange, New York, 1870, I, p. 370, November 12, 1819.

At one time the set became violently vegetarian. The enthusiasm came to a sudden end, as narrated by Joseph Severn:

"Leigh Hunt most eloquently discussed the charms and advantages of these vegetable banquets, depicting in glowing words the cauliflowers swimming in melted butter, and the peas and beans never profaned with animal gravy. In the midst of his rhapsody he was interrupted by the venerable Wordsworth, who begged permission to ask a question. 'If,' he said, 'by chance of good luck they ever met with a caterpillar, they thanked their stars for the delicious morsel of animal food.' This absurdity all came to an end by an ugly discovery. Haydon, whose ruddy face had kept the other enthusiasts from sinking under their scanty diet—for they clung fondly to the hope that they would become like him, although they increased daily in pallor and leanness—this Haydon was discovered one day coming out of a chop-house. He was promptly taxed with treachery, when he honestly confessed that every day after the vegetable repast he ate a good beef-steak. This fact plunged the others in despair, and Leigh Hunt assured me that on vegetable diet his constitution had received a blow from which he had never recovered. With Shelley it was different, for he was by nature formed to regard animal food repulsively."⁶

The causes of the enmity of the press were political rather than literary or personal and have already been sufficiently dwelt upon in the preceding chapters. The strong rivalry between Edinburgh and London as publishing strongholds intensified the strife. Hunt in particular had centered attention upon himself by his persistent and violent attacks on Gifford and Southey for several years previous to 1817. Besides *The Examiner's* persistent allusions to these two unregenerates, a savage diatribe had appeared in the *Feast of the Poets*, which alluded to Gifford's humble origin and mediocre ability, charged him with being a government tool, and continued: "But a vile, peevish temper, the more inexcusable in its indulgence, because he appears to have had early warning of its effects, breaks out in every page of his criticism, and only renders his affected grinning the more obnoxious . . . I pass over the nauseous epistle to Peter Pindar, and even notes to his Baviad and Mœviad, where though less vulgar in his language, he has a great deal of the pert cant and snip-snap which he deprecates."⁷ During 1817, *The Examiner* had concerned itself particularly

⁶ Sharp, *The Life and Letters of Joseph Severn*, p. 33.

⁷ Notes, pp. 57-61.

with Southey. He had been called an apostate, a hypocrite, and almost every other name in Hunt's abusive vocabulary. Sir Walter Scott had not been spared. His politics were said to be easily estimated by the "simple fact, that of all the advocates of Charles the Second, he is the least scrupulous in mentioning his crimes, because he is the least abashed;" his command of prose was declared equal to nothing beyond "a plain statement or a brief piece of criticism;" his poetry "a little thinking conveyed in a great many words."⁸ Hunt thus secured to himself, through offensive and aggressive abuse, the hostility of the Tories both in England and in Scotland. His weaknesses and affectations made him a conspicuous and assailable target for the inevitable return fire.⁹

The establishment by the Tories of the *Quarterly Review* in 1809 and of *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1817 was with the view of opposing and, if possible, of suppressing the *Edinburgh Review* and *The Examiner*. The brunt of the hostility fell upon the latter, for Hunt, by reason of his extreme social and religious policy, could not always rally the *Edinburgh Review* to his support. With the founding of the *London Magazine* in 1820 he had a new ally in its editor, John Scott, but the war had then already raged for three years, and Scott fell a victim to it in two years' time.¹⁰ By a process of elimination Scott

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-68.

⁹ Other controversies, such as the one with Antoine Dubost, show Hunt's aggressiveness. Dubost had sold a painting of Damocles to his patron, a Mr. Hope. The latter became convinced that the author was an imposter and tore the signature from the picture. In retaliation Dubost painted and exhibited *Beauty and the Beast*, a caricature of the whole incident. *The Examiner* accused him of forgery and rank ingratitude. Hunt does not seem to have had any particular proof or knowledge on the subject, yet he employed scathing denunciation in writing of it. Dubost replied and asserted that Hunt was Hope's hireling, and that he had "ransacked the whole calendar of scurrility, and hunted for nick-names through all the common places of blackguardism." (Dubost, *An Appeal to the Public against the Calumnies of the Examiner*, London, n. d., p. 9.)

¹⁰ He undertook a vindication of the Cockney School in a series of four articles, in which he pointed out the "mean insincerity," the "vulgar slander," the "mouthing cant," the "shabby spite," the falsehoods and the recantations of Blackwood's. The description of the conditions, under

fixed the identity of "Z"—such was the only signature of the articles on the Cockney School in *Blackwood's*—upon Lockhart. He also asserted that Lockhart was the editor of the magazine. Lockhart demanded an apology. His friend Christie took up the quarrel. In the duel which followed Scott was fatally wounded. His death followed Keats's within four days.

The method of attack with the *Quarterly* and with *Blackwood's* was much the same. They differed chiefly in the style of approach. The former may be compared to heavy artillery, slow, cumbrous and crushing. The reviews indeed often verge on dullness and stupidity. Neither Gifford nor Southey seemed to have been blessed with the saving grace of humor in dealing with the Cockney School. *Blackwood's*, on the other hand, had too much, for whenever one of the so-called Cockneys was mentioned, its contributors wallowed in the mire of coarse buffoonery and cruel satire, disgusting scandal and vulgar parody. The only counter-irritant to such a dose is the clever joking and keen humor; but even when this is clean, which is rare, the whole is rendered unpalatable by the thought of its cruelty and of its frequent falsity. Furthermore, *Blackwood's* was more merciless in its persecution than the *Quarterly* in that it was untiring. It was perpetually discharging a fresh fusilade. Both magazines disguised their real motives under a cloak of religious zeal and monarchical loyalty.

While Hunt did much to bring the hornet's nest about his ears, he was not wholly deserving of the amount, and not at all of the kind, of stinging calumny that he had to endure. Neither were the members of the Cockney School the only ones who provoked such antagonism from the same magazine. Other famous libels of *Blackwood's* that should be mentioned to show the disposition of its controllers were the *Chaldee*

which Scott pictured the articles of his enemies to have been written, smacks of the mocking humor of *Blackwood's* itself: "a redolency of Leith-ale, and tobacco smoke, which floats about all the pleasantries in question,—giving one the idea of its facetious articles having been written on the slopped table of a tavern parlour in the back-wynd, after the *convives* had retired, and left the author to solitude, pipe-ashes, and the dregs of black-strap."

Manuscript; the *Madonna of Dresden* and other effusions of the "*Baron von Lauræwinckel*"; the *Diary and Horæ Sinicæ of Ensign O'Doherty*; and the *Diary of William Wastle, Blackwood and Dr. Morris*. *Letter to Sir Walter Scott, Bart., on the Moral and other Characteristics of the Ebony and Shandrydan School*,¹¹ cites a full list of *Blackwood's* victims. These, besides those of the Cockney School, were said to be Jeffrey, Professor Playfair, Professor Dugald Stewart, Professor Leslie, James Macintosh, Lord Brougham, Moore, Professor David Ricardo, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Pringle, Dalzell, Cleghorn, Graham, Sharpe, Jameson, and Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd. The characters in *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, Ticklers, Scorpions and Shepherds, were said by the pamphleteer to respectively tickle, sting and stultify, and to make a business "of insulting worth, offending delicacy, calumniating genius, and outraging the decencies and violating all the sanctities of life." Their weapons were "loathsome billingsgate and brutality," and "sublime bathos." An interesting statement, not elsewhere found, is made by the anonymous author of the pamphlet that the proprietor of the Black Bull Inn imputed the death of his wife to the first volume of *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, a series similar to the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. Sir Walter Scott is told that he cannot remain innocent if he remains indifferent to the machinations of the "Ebony and Shandrydan School"—as the writer pleases to call the *Blackwood's* group. Another interesting pamphlet of like nature is *The Scorpion Critic Unmasked; or Animadversions on a Pretended Review of "Fleurs, a Poem, in Four Books," which appeared in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine for June, 1821, in a Letter to a Friend*.¹² *Blackwood's* had called Nathaniel John Hollingsworth, the author of the poem, and others of his type, the "Leg of Mutton School."¹³ Nothing

¹¹ Published in Edinburgh in 1820 and signed by "An American Scotchman."

¹² Published in Newcastle in 1821.

¹³ The School was thus described in *Blackwood's*: "The chief constellations, in this poetical firmament, consist of led captains, and clerical hangers-on, whose pleasure, and whose business, it is, to celebrate in tuneful verse, the virtues of some angelic patron, who keeps a good table, and has interest with the archbishop, or the India House. Verily they have their reward." In other words this group was composed of diners-out or parasites, and sycophants for livings and military appointments.

in fact seems to have given this magazine so much malicious delight as to create schools, perhaps in a spirit of rivalry with the "Lake School" of the *Edinburgh Review*. In the preceding April the "Manchester School" had been presented by *Blackwood's* to the public. Hollingsworth in turn created the "Scorpion School" in order to deride *Blackwood's*. Other pamphlets of the same kind were *Rebellion again Gulliver; or R-D-C-L-SM in Lilliput. A Poetical Fragment from a Lilliputian Manuscript*, an anonymous publication which appeared in Edinburgh in 1820; *Aspersions answered: an explanatory Statement, advanced to the Public at Large, and to Every Reader of The Quarterly Review in Particular*;¹⁴ and *Another Article for the Quarterly Review*;¹⁵ both by William Hone in reply to the charge of irreligion made by the *Quarterly* against him.

William Blackwood, John Wilson or "Christopher North," Lockhart, and perhaps Maginn, share the blame severally of *Blackwood's*; while in the case of the *Quarterly*, to Gifford and Southey, already mentioned, must be added Sir Walter Scott and Croker. The two last certainly countenanced the actions of the others, even if they took no more active part. There seems to be no way of determining the individual authorship of the various articles. It was a secret jealously guarded at the time and it is unlikely that any further disclosures will come to light. The victims themselves hazarded as many guesses as more recent critics with no greater degree of certainty. Leigh Hunt thought that the articles were written by Sir Walter Scott;¹⁶ Hazlitt said, "To pay those fellows *in their own coin*, the way would be to begin with Walter Scott *and have at his clump foot*;"¹⁷ Charles Dilke thought that the articles were written by Lockhart with the encouragement of Scott;¹⁸ Haydon thought that "Z" was Terry the actor, an intimate of the Blackwood party, who had been exasperated because Hunt

¹⁴ Published in London, 1824.

¹⁵ Published in London also in 1824.

¹⁶ Keats, *Works*, IV, p. 66.

¹⁷ C. C. Clarke, *Recollections of Writers*, p. 147.

¹⁸ Keats, *Works*, IV, p. 66.

had failed to notice him in *The Examiner*;¹⁹ Shelley fancied that the articles in the *Quarterly* were by Southey, and, on his denial, attributed them to Henry Hart Milman.²⁰ Mrs. Oliphant in her two ponderous volumes, *William Blackwood and His Sons*, practically asserts that "Z" was Lockhart.²¹ If the extent of her research is to be the gauge of its value, her opinion is a very valuable one. Mr. Colvin advances the theory that "Z" was Wilson or Lockhart, possibly revised by William Blackwood.²² Mr. Courthope thinks that Croker was the author of the articles on *Endymion* in the *Quarterly*.²³ Mr. Herford thinks that the whole campaign against the Cockney School was "largely worked out" by Lockhart.²⁴

Hunt, Shelley, Hazlitt and Keats were the chief targets in the Cockney School. The attacks on each of these are of such length as to require separate discussion and will be returned to later. Those who attained lesser notoriety were Charles Lamb, Haydon, Barry Cornwall, John Hamilton Reynolds, Cornelius Webb, Charles Wells, Charles Dilke, Charles Lloyd, P. G. Patmore and John Ketch (Abraham Franklin). Those who moved within the same circle and who may by attraction be considered Cockneys are Charles Cowden Clarke and his wife, Vincent Novello, Charles Armitage Brown, the Olliers, Horace and James Smith, Douglas Jerrold, Joseph Severn, Laman Blanchard, Thomas Noon Talfourd, Thomas Love Peacock, and perhaps Thomas Hood.

Charles Lamb was first attacked in 1820. He had written essays somewhat in the manner of Hunt and he was a contributor to the *London Magazine*, which had blundered by censuring Castlereagh, Canning, and Wilberforce. The much-despised Hazlitt was another of its force. Accordingly, "Elia" was pronounced a "Cockney Scribbler," *Christ's Hospital* an essay full of offensive and reprehensible personali-

¹⁹ *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, p. 349.

²⁰ Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, II, p. 302.

²¹ I, p. 133.

²² *Keats*, p. 120.

²³ *Life in Poetry: Law in Taste*, pp. 21-23.

²⁴ *Age of Wordsworth*, p. 58.

ties,²⁵ and *All Fool's Day* "mere inanity and very Cockneyism."²⁶ In April, 1822, *Blackwood's* returned to the attack but with more than usual good nature. In *Noctes Ambrosianæ* of that month Tickler is made to say:

"Elia in his happiest moods delights me; he is a fine soul; but when he is dull, his dullness sets human stupidity at defiance. He is like a well-bred, ill-trained pointer. He has a fine nose, but he can't or won't range. He always keeps close to your foot, and then he points larks or tit-mice. You see him snuffing and snoking and brandishing his tail with the most impassioned enthusiasm, and then drawn round into a semi-circle he stands beautifully—dead set. You expect a burst of partridges, or a towering cock-pheasant, when lo, and behold, away flits a lark, or you discover a mouse's nest, or there is absolutely nothing at all. Perhaps a shrew has been there the day before. Yet if Elia were mine, I would not part with him, for all his faults."

A few years later Lamb became one of *Blackwood's* contributors. Two attacks on Lamb proceeded from the *Quarterly*. The *Confessions of a Drunkard*, the writer says, "affords a fearful picture of the consequences of intemperance which we have reason to know is a true tale."²⁷ In his *Progress of Infidelity*, Southey asserted that Elia's volume of essays wanted "only sounder religious feeling, to be as delightful as it is original."²⁸ Lamb's wrath had been slowly gathering under the strain of repeated attacks on Hunt, Hazlitt and himself. It culminated with Southey's article. In the *London Magazine* of October, 1823, he repudiated at considerable length the compliments thrust upon him at the expense of his friends, and denied the arraignment of drunkenness and heterodoxy. Matters were then smoothed over between him and Southey through an explanation which his unflinching good nature could not resist.

Haydon was nick-named the "Raphael of the Cockneys."²⁹ Until the exhibition of *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* in Edinburgh in 1820, he underwent the same kind of persecution as his friends. His "greasy hair" was about as notorious as Hazlett's "pimpled face." But the picture converted *Black-*

²⁵ *Blackwood's*, November, 1820.

²⁷ *Quarterly*, April, 1822.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, May, 1821.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, January, 1823.

²⁹ *Blackwood's*, April, 1819.

wood's crew. They apologized and confessed that their misapprehensions had been due to the absurd style of laudation in *The Examiner*. Henceforward they acknowledged him to be "a high Tory and an aristocrat, and a sound Christian."³⁰

Bryan Waller Procter, or Barry Cornwall, was satirized in *Blackwood's* for his so-called effeminacy. In October, 1823, the following facetious passage occurs: "the merry thought of a chick—three tea-spoonsfulls of peas, the eighth part of a French roll, a sprig of cauliflower, and an almost imperceptible dew of parsley" would dine the author of *The Deluge*. The article on Shelley's *Posthumous Poems* in the *Edinburgh* of July, 1824, was attributed to Procter by *Blackwood's* and assailed in a most disgusting manner. The article was by Hazlitt.

John Hamilton Reynolds was a friend of Keats, one of the *Young Poets* reviewed by Hunt in *The Examiner*, and a contributor to the *London Magazine*. His two poems, *Eden of the Imagination* and *Fairies*, showed Hunt's influence. In the former he had even dared to praise Hunt in the notes.

Cornelius Webb was the author of numerous poems which exhibit in a marked degree the Huntian peculiarities of diction pointed out in the first chapter. He is moreover responsible for the unfortunate lines so often quoted in derision by *Blackwood's*:

"Keats

The Muses' son of promise! and what feats
He yet may do."

His sonnets in the *Literary Pocket Book* were thus reviewed in *Blackwood's* of December, 1821: "Now, Cornelius Webbe is a Jaw-breaker. Let any man who desires to have his ivory dislodged, read the above sonnet to March. Or shall we call Cornelius, the grinder? After reading aloud these fourteen lines, we called in our Odontist, and he found that every tooth in our head was loosened, and a slight fracture in the jaw. 'My dearest Christopher', said the Odontist, in his wonted classical spirit, 'beware the Ides of March.' So saying, he bounced up in our faces and disappeared."

³⁰ *Life, Letters and Table Talk of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, p. 69.

Charles Wells was a friend of Hazlitt and of Keats. In true Cockney fashion he sent the latter a sonnet and some roses and thus began the acquaintance. Dilke was a friend of Keats, a radical, and an independent critic in the manner of Hunt. Charles Lloyd was Lamb's friend, one of the contributors to the *Literary Pocket Book* of 1820, and a poet of sentimental and descriptive propensities. P. G. Patmore was "Count Tims, the Cockney."³¹ Although he was a correspondent of *Blackwood's*, his son has remarked that he was not *persona grata*, but was employed to secure news from London; and permitted to write only when he did not defend his friends too much.³² "John Ketch" (Abraham Franklin) is mentioned by Lord Byron as one of the "Cockney Scribblers."³³ Thomas Hood, as brother-in-law of Reynolds, as assistant editor of the *London Magazine*, and as an imitator in a small degree in his early work of Lamb and of Hunt may be enumerated among the Cockneys, although he is not usually included. Laman Blanchard was the friend of Procter, Lamb and Hunt. He imitated Procter's *Dramatic Sketches* and Lamb's *Essays*. Talfourd was a member of the circle and the friend and biographer of Lamb. He defended Edward Moxon when he was prosecuted for publishing *Queen Mab*. Peacock was the friend of Shelley. The Ollier brothers, publishers, introduced Keats, Shelley, Hunt, Lamb and Procter to the public.³⁴

Although Byron was frequently at war with *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly*, and although he was closely associated with Shelley and Hunt, he was never stigmatized as a member of the Cockney School. Yet through his alliance with them he came in for some opprobrium that he would otherwise have escaped. *Blackwood's* strove through ridicule to prevent any growth of familiarity with Hunt or his fraternity. Its attitude towards the dedication to Byron of the *Story of Rimini* has already been mentioned. Hunt's statement already quoted on

³¹ *Blackwood's*, May, 1823, pp. 558-566.

³² *Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*, I, p. 23.

³³ *Letters and Journals*, V, p. 588.

³⁴ *St. James Magazine*, XXXV, p. 387 ff.

p. 95 that "for the drama, whatever good passages such a writer will always put forth, we hold that he (Byron) has no more qualification than we have" was a choice morsel for the Scotch birds of prey, enjoyed to the fullest extent in a review of *Lyndsay's Dramas of the Ancient World*:

"Prigs will be preaching—and nothing but conceit cometh out of Cockaigne. What an emasculated band of dramatists have deployed upon our boards. A pale-faced, sallow set, like the misses of some Cockney boarding-school, taking a constitutional walk, to get rid of their habits of eating lime out of the wall. . . . But it was reserved to the spirit of atheism of an age, to talk of a Cockney writing a tragedy. When the mind ceases to believe in a Providence, it can believe in anything else; but the pious soul feels that while to dream, even in sleep, that a Cockney had written a successful tragedy, would be repugnant to reason; certainly a more successful tragedy could not be imagined, from the utter destruction of Cockaigne and all its inhabitants. An earthquake or a shower of lava would be too complimentary to the Cockneys; but what do you think of a shower of soot from a multitude of foul chimneys, and the smell of gas from exploded pipes. Something might be made of the idea. . . . The truth is, that these mongrel and doggerel drivellers have an instinctive abhorrence of a true poet; and they all ran out like so many curs baying at the feet of the Pegasus on which Byron rode . . . and the eulogists of homely, and fireside, and little back-parlour incest, what could they imagine of the unseducable spirit of the spotless Angiolina? . . . When Elliston, ignorant of what one gentleman owes to another, or driven by stupidity to forget it, brought the Doge on the stage, how crowed the Bantam Cocks of Cockaigne to see it damned! . . . But Manfred and the Doge are not dead; while all that small fry have disappeared in the mud, and are dried up like so many tadpoles in a ditch, under the summer drowth. 'Lord Byron,' quoth Mr. Leigh Hunt, 'has about as much dramatic genius as *ourselves*!' He might as well have said, 'Lucretia had about as much chastity as my own heroine in Rimini;' or, 'Sir Phillip Sidney was about as much of the gentleman as myself!'"³⁵

Byron's attitude toward the Cockney School was expressed in a letter written to John Murray during the Bowles controversy:

"With the rest of his (Hunt's) young people I have no acquaintance, except through some things of theirs (which have been sent out without my desire), and I confess that till I had read them I was not aware of the full extent of human absurdity. Like Garrick's 'Ode to Shakespeare,' they 'defy criticism.' These are of the personages who decry Pope. . . .

³⁵ *Blackwood's*, December, 1821.

Mr. Hunt redeems himself by occasional beauties; but the rest of these poor creatures seem so far gone that I would not 'march through Coventry with them, that's flat!' were I in Mr. Hunt's place. To be sure, he has 'led his ragamuffins where they will be well peppered'; but a system-maker must receive all sorts of proselytes. When they have really seen life—when they have felt it—when they have travelled beyond the far distant boundaries of the wilds of Middlesex—when they have overpassed the Alps of Highgate, and traced to its sources the Nile of the New River—then, and not till then, can it properly be permitted to them to despise Pope. . . . The grand distinction of the under forms of the new school of poets is their *vulgarity*. By this I do not mean that they are coarse, but 'shabby-genteel,' as it is termed. A man may be *coarse* and yet not *vulgar*, and the reverse. . . . It is in their *finery* that the new school are *most* vulgar, and they may be known by this at once; as what we called at Harrow "A Sunday blood" might be easily distinguished from a gentleman, although his clothes might be the better cut, and his boots the best blackened of the two:—probably because he made the one or cleaned the other, with his own hands. . . . In the present case, I speak of writing, not of persons. Of the latter I know nothing; of the former I judge as it is found." ³⁶

Byron's opinion of Keats is too well known to need repetition. He thought there was hope for Barry Cornwall if "he don't get spoiled by green tea and the praises of Pentonville and Paradise Row. The pity of these men is, that they never lived in *high life* nor in *solitude*: there is no medium for the knowledge of the *busy* or the *still* world. If admitted into high life for a season, it is merely as *spectators*—they form no part of the mechanism thereof." ³⁷

Blackwood's of December, 1822, in a review of *The Liberal*, advised Byron to "cut the Cockney"—"by far the most unaccountable of God's works." Hunt is denominated "the menial of a lord." When Byron notwithstanding its advice continued his "conjunction with these deluded drivellers of Cockaigne" *Blackwood's* grew savage towards the peer himself: it is said that he suffered himself

"to be so enervated by the unworthy Delilahs which have enslaved his imagination, as to be reduced to the foul office of displaying blind buffooneries before the Philistines of Cockaigne . . . I feel a moral conviction that his lordship must have taken the Examiner, the Liberal, the Rimini,

³⁶ *Letters and Journals*, V, pp. 587-590. March 25, 1821.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, V, pp. 362-363. September 12, 1821.

the Round Table, as his model, and endeavored to write himself down to the level of the capacities and the swinish tastes of those with whom he has the misfortune, originally, I believe, from charitable motives, to associate. This is the most charitable hypothesis which I can frame. Indeed there are some verses which have all the appearance of having been interpolated by the King of the Cockneys."³⁸

When Byron and Hunt had separated, *Blackwood's* attempted to reinstate Byron in his former position by declaring that he had been disgusted beyond endurance on Hunt's arrival in Italy and that he had cut him very soon in a "paroxysm of loathing."³⁹

The declaration of war between the Cockneys and the Tory press was made with a review of the *Story of Rimini* in the *Quarterly* of January, 1816. From this time on Hunt was the choice prey of the two magazines, and others were attacked principally on account of him, or reached through him. Hunt's writings were termed "eruptions of a disease" with which he insists upon inoculating mankind; his language "an ungrammatical, unauthorized, chaotic jargon." *Blackwood's* of October, 1817, contained the first of the long series of abusive articles which appeared in its columns. Hazlitt in the *Edinburgh Review* in June of the preceding year had acclaimed the *Story of Rimini* to be "a reminder of the pure and glorious style that prevailed among us before French modes and French methods of criticism." In it he had discovered a resemblance to Chaucer, to the voluptuous pathos of Boccaccio and to the laughing graces of Ariosto. To offset such statements *Blackwood's* dubbed the new school the "Cockney School" and made Hunt its chief doctor and professor. (Later, in 1823, *Blackwood's* proudly claimed the honor of christening and said that the *Quarterly* used the epithet only when it had become a part of English criticism.) It declared the dedication to Byron an insult and the poem the product of affectation and gaudiness and continued:

"The beaux are attorney's apprentices, with chapeau bras and Limerick gloves—fiddlers, harp teachers, and clerks of genius: the belles are faded,

³⁸ *Letters of Timothy Ticker, Esq.*, July, 1823.

³⁹ September, 1824.

fan-twinkling spinsters, prurient vulgar misses from school, and enormous citizen's wives. The company are entertained with luke-warm negus, and the sounds of a paltry piano forte. . . . His poetry resembles that of a man who has kept company with kept-mistresses. His muse talks indelicately like the tea-sipping milliner's girl. Some excuse for her there might have been, had she been hurried away by imagination or passion; but with her, indecency seems a disease, she appears to speak unclean things from perfect inanition." Hunt "would fain be always tripping and waltzing, and he is very sorry that he cannot be allowed to walk about in the morning with yellow breeches and flesh-colored silk stockings. He sticks an artificial rosebud in his button hole in the midst of winter. He wears no neckcloth, and cuts his hair in imitation of the prints of Petrarch."

Nature in the eyes of a Cockney was said to consist only of "green fields, jaunty streams, and o'er-arching leafiness;" no mountains were higher than Highgate-hill nor streams more pastoral than the Serpentine River.⁴⁰ *Blackwood's* was near the truth in its criticism of Hunt's conception of nature. While his appreciation was very genuine, it was restricted to rural or suburban scenes, "of the town, towny."⁴¹ The scale was that of the window garden or a flower pot. Who but he could rhapsodize over a cut flower or a bit of green; or could speak in spring "of being gay and vernal and daffodilean?"⁴² Yet he produced some delightful rural poetry. Take this for instance:

"You know the rural feeling, and the charm
That stillness has for a world-fretted ear,
'Tis now deep whispering all about me here,
With thousand tiny bushings, like a swarm
Of atom bees, or fairies in alarm
Or noise of numerous bliss from distant spheres."⁴³

The general characteristics of the school, briefly summarized, were said to be ignorance and vulgarity, an entire absence of religion, a vague and sour Jacobinism for patriotism, admiration of Chaucer and Spenser when they resemble Hunt, and extreme moral depravity and obscenity. November, 1817, of *Blackwood's* contained the notorious accusation against the

⁴⁰ Hunt, *Correspondence*, I, p. 136.

⁴¹ Daniel Maclise, *A Gallery of Illustrious Literary Characters* (1830-1838). London, n. d., p. 132.

⁴² William Dorling, *Memoirs of Dora Greenwell*, London, 1885, p. 75.

⁴³ *Epistle to Barnes*.

Story of Rimini of immorality of purpose.⁴⁴ The poem was called "the genteel comedy of incest." Francesca's sin was declared voluntary and her sufferings sentimental. The changes from the historical version, an espousal by proxy instead of betrothal, the omission of deformity, the substitution of the duel for murder, and the happy opening, were pronounced wilful perversions for the furtherance of corruption. Ford's treatment of the same theme much more elevated. Hunt's defense was that the catastrophe was Francesca's sufficient punishment.⁴⁵ In May, 1818, the same charge was repeated: "No woman who has not either lost her chastity, or is desirous of losing it, ever read the 'Story of Rimini' without the flushings of shame and of self-reproach."

The Examiner of November 2 and 16, 1817, quoted extracts from the first of these articles and called upon the author to avow himself; otherwise to an "utter disregard of *Truth* and *Decency*, he adds the height of *Meanness* and *Cowardice*."⁴⁶ As might have been expected, this demand brought forth nothing more than a disavowal from the London publishers who handled *Blackwood's* of all responsibility in the matter. June 14, 1818, *The Examiner* assailed the editor of the *Quarterly* as a government critic who disguised a political quarrel in literary garb, as a sycophant to power and wealth:

⁴⁴ This accusation has been made still more recently by Mr. Palgrave, who speaks of the "slipshod morality of *Rimini* and *Hero*." *Poetical Works of John Keats*, p. 263.

⁴⁵ In 1844, however, he refashioned the whole poem, now representing Giovanni as deformed and as the murderer of his wife and brother, whereas in the version of 1816 Paolo had been slain in a duel and Francesca had died of grief. In 1855, he made a second change and went back to the 1816 version. The duel he preserved in the fragment, *Corso and Emilia*. Hunt's translation of Dante's episode appeared in *Stories of Verse*, 1855. In 1857 he made a third change and restored the version of 1844.

⁴⁶ The editor of *Blackwood's* in a letter dated April 20, 1818, offered space to P. G. Patmore for a favourable critique of Hunt's poetry, reserving to himself the privilege of answering such an article. He stated further that if Hunt had employed less violent language towards the reviewer of *Rimini* he might have been given a friendly explanation. *Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*, II, p. 438.

"Grown old in the service of corruption, he drivels on to the last with prostituted impotence, and shameless effrontery; salves a meagre reputation for wit, by venting the dribblets of his spleen and impertinence on others; answers their arguments by confuting himself; mistakes habitual obtuseness of intellect for a particular acuteness, not to be imposed upon by shallow pretensions; unprincipled rancor for zealous loyalty; and the irritable, discontented, vindictive, and peevish effusions of bodily pain and mental infirmity, for proofs of refinement of taste and strength of understanding."

This condescension to a use of his enemies' weapons only weakened Hunt's position. Yet in the light of the secrecy maintained at the time and the mystery surrounding the matter ever since, it is interesting to read *Blackwood's* contorted reply to Hunt's demand for an open fight, written as late as January, 1826:

"Nor let it be said that, either on this or any other occasion, the moral Satyrists (sic) in this magazine ever wished to remain unknown. How, indeed, could they wish for what they well knew was impossible? All the world has all along known the names of the gentlemen who have uttered our winged words. Nor did it ever, for one single moment, enter into the head of any one of them to wish—not to scorn concealment. To gentlemen, too, they at all times acted like gentlemen; but was it ever dreamt by the wildest that they were to consider as such the scum of the earth? 'If I but knew who was my slanderer,' was at one time the ludicrous skraigh of the convicted Cockney. Why did he not ask? and what would he have got by asking? Shame and confusion of face—unanswerable argument and cruel chastisement. For before one word would have been deigned to the sinner, he must have eaten—and the bitter roll is yet ready for him—all the lies he had told for the last twenty years, and must either have choked or been kicked."

In January, 1818, *Blackwood's* issued a manifesto of their future campaign. The Keatses, Shelleys, and Webbes, were to be taken in turn. The charges of profligacy and obscenity against Hunt's poem were repeated, but it was emphatically stated that there was no implication made in reference to his private character—an ominous statement that any one with any knowledge of *Blackwood's* usual methods could only construe into a warning that such an implication would speedily follow. The article was signed "Z," a shadowy personage who sorrowfully called himself the "present object" of Hunt's resentment and dislike. He seems to have expected gratitude

and affection in return for articles that would compare favorably with the most scurrilous billingsgate of any of the Humanistic controversies. In May, 1818, with due ceremony, Hunt was proclaimed "King of the Cockneys" and editor of the Cockney Court-gazette. His kingdom was the "Land of Cockaigne," a borrowing, most probably, from the thirteenth century satire by that name. Keats's sonnet containing the line "He of the rose, the violet, the spring" became the official Cockney poem—by an "amiable but infatuated bardling." John Hunt was made Prince John. With the lapse of time Hunt's crimes seem to have multiplied. He is called a lunatic, a libeller, an abettor of murder and of assassination, a coward, an incendiary, a Jacobin, a plebeian and a foe to virtue. He is instructed, if sickened with the sins and follies of mankind, to withdraw

"to the holy contemplation of your own divine perfections, and there 'perk up with timid mouth' 'and lamping eyes' (as you have it) upon what to you is dearer and more glorious than all created things besides, till you become absorbed in your own identity—motionless, mighty, and magnificent, in the pure calm of Cockneyism . . . instead of rousing yourself from your lair, like some noble beast when attacked by the hunter, you roll yourself round like a sick hedgehog, that has crawled out into the 'crisp' gravel walk round your box at Hampstead, and oppose only the feeble pricks of your hunch'd-up back to the kicks of any one who wishes less to hurt you, than to drive you into your den."

The *Quarterly* of the same month contained the notorious review of *Foliage*. Southey, in a counterfeited Cockney style, contorts Hunt's devotion to his leafy luxuries, his flowerets, wine, music and other social joys into Epicureanism⁴⁷ and like unsound principles. He ever goes so far as to accuse him of incest and adultery in his private life. There are disguised but unmistakable references to Keats and to Shelley; the latter is credited with evil doings that fall little short of machinations with the devil. The volume of poems, which was the ostensible pretext for this parade of foul slander, not a word of which was true, has, Southey says, richness of language and picturesque-

⁴⁷ This charge was renewed in a review of Hunt's *Autobiography* in 1850 in the *Eclectic Review*, XCII, p. 416.

ness of imagery.⁴⁸ The July number of *Blackwood's* went a step beyond Southey and identified the characters of the *Story of Rimini* with Hunt and his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Kent. After ostentatiously giving currency to the scandal, "Z" then proceeds to deny the rumor—which had no existence save in the minds of Hunt's vilifiers—in order to preserve immunity from libel. At the time that Lamb replied to Southey in 1823 he took up these charges made against Hunt in 1818. He said:

"I was admitted to his household for several years, and do most solemnly aver that I believe him to be in his domestic relations as correct as any man. He chose an ill-judged subject for a poem. . . . In spite of 'Rimini,' I must look upon its author as a man of taste and a poet. He is better than so; he is one of the most cordial-minded men that I ever knew, and matchless as a fireside companion. I do not mean to affront or wound your feelings when I say that in his more genial moods, he has often reminded me of you."⁴⁹

A facetious bit of prose *On Sonnet Writing* and a *Sonnet on Myself* in *Blackwood's* of April, 1819, parodied excellently the Cockney conceit and mannerisms. The September number contrasted Henry Hunt, the representative of the Cockney School of Politics, with Leigh Hunt, of the Cockney School of Poetry; resenting loudly the claim of the two to prominence for "even Douglasses never had more than one Bell-the-cat at a time." While Henry Hunt "the brawny white feather of Cockspur-street" addresses street mobs, the other Hunt, "the

⁴⁸ Byron greatly resented Southey's article: "I am glad Mr. Southey owns that article on *Foliage* which excited my choler so much. But who else could have been the author? Who but Southey would have had the baseness, under the pretext of reviewing the work of one man, insidiously to make it nest work for hatching malicious calumnies against others? . . . I say nothing of the critique itself on *Foliage*; with the exception of a few sonnets, it was unworthy of Hunt. But what was the object of that article? I repeat, to villify and scatter his dark and devilish insinuation against me and others. (Medwin, *Conversations of Lord Byron*, p. 102.) Again Byron wrote of Southey in 1820: "Hence his quarterly overflows, political and literary, in what he has termed himself 'the ungentle craft,' and his special wrath against Mr. Leigh Hunt, notwithstanding that Hunt has done more for Wordsworth's reputation as a poet (such as it is), than all the Lakers could in their interchange of praises for the last twenty-five years." (*Letters and Journals*, V, p. 84.)

⁴⁹ *London Magazine*, October, 1823.

lank and sallow hypochondriac of the 'leafy rise' and 'farmy fields' of Hampstead," "the whining milk-sop sonneteer of the Examiner" is said to speak to a "sorely depressed remnant of 'single gentlemen' in lodgings, and single ladies we know not where—a generation affected with headaches, tea-drinking and all the nostalgia of the nerves." It is hardly necessary to add that there was no connection whatsoever between the two men.

Blackwood's of October, 1819, announced *Foliage* to be a posthumous publication of Hunt's, presented to the public by his three friends, Keats, Haydon and Novello. An affecting picture is drawn of the now-departed Hunt in his once familiar costume of dressing-gown, yellow breeches and red slippers, sipping tea, playing whist and writing sonnets. His statement in the preface that a "love of sociability, of the country, and the fine imagination of the Greeks" had prompted the poems is greatly ridiculed. The first is said to have caused his death by an over-indulgence in tea-drinking; his feeling for nature is said to be limited to the lawns, stiles and hedges of Hampstead and his knowledge of the imagination of the Greeks to quotations. The *Sonnet On Receiving a Crown of Ivy from Keats* came in for especial derision—"a blister clapped on his head" would have been considered more appropriate.

Hunt's *Literary Pocket Books* for 1819 and 1820 were reviewed in *Blackwood's* in December, 1819, in a remarkably kind article. They are recommended as worth three times the price. The reviewer, who was no other than "Christopher North," stated that he had purchased six copies. *Blackwood's* of September, 1820, reviewed *The Indicator*; of December, 1821, the 1822 *Literary Pocket Book*; the last contained coarse and unkind allusions to Hunt's health. It declared the production of sonnets in London and its suburbs about equal to the number of births and deaths. In reply, *The Examiner* of December 16, 1821, in an article entitled *Modern Criticism*, italicised extracts from *Blackwood's* to bring out peculiarities of grammar and diction. *Blackwood's* of January, 1822, contained a sonnet which it was pretended was Hunt's New Year's greeting, but which was instead a clever parody on his sonnet-style.

The issue of the next month announced the triumvirate of *The Liberal* and, through Byron's "noble generosity," Hunt's departure with his wife and "little Johnnys" upon a "perilous voyage on the un-cockney ocean. . . . He and his companions will now, like his own Nereids,

turn

And toss upon the ocean's lifting billows,
Making them *banks and pillows*,
Upon whose *springiness* they lean and ride;
Some with an *inward back*; some *upward-eyed*,
Feeling the sky; and some with *sidelong hips*,
O'er which the surface of the water slips."

The first number of the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* appeared in March. The following passage refers to the launching of *The Liberal* in a dialogue between the Editor and O'Doherty:

O. Hand me the lemons. This holy alliance of Pisa will be a queer affair. *The Examiner* has let down its price from a tenpenny to a sevenpenny. They say the Editor here is to be one of that faction, for they must publish in London, of course.

Ed. Of course, but I doubt if they will be able to sell many. Byron is a prince, but these dabbling dogglers destroy every dish they dip in.

O. Apt alliteration's artful aid.

Ed. Imagine Shelly [sic], with his spavin, and Hunt, with his staingalt, going in harness with such a caperer as Byron, three-a-breast. He'll knock the wind out of them both the first canter.

O. 'Tis pity Keats is dead.—I suppose you could not venture to publish a sonnet in which he is mentioned now? The *Quarterly* (who killed him, as Shelly says) would blame you.

Ed. Let's hear it. Is it your own?

O. No; 'twas written many months ago by a certain great Italian genius, who cuts a figure about the London routs—one Fudgiolo.

Ed. Try to recollect it. (Here follows the sonnet.)

Blackwood's of December, 1822, had passages on the Cockney School in *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. Number VII. of the series of articles on its members reviewed Hunt's *Florentine Lovers*, or, in their phrasing, his *Art of Love*, the story of which is wilfully misrepresented. Hunt is declared "the most irresistible knight-errant erotic extant . . . the most contemptible little capon of the bantam breed that ever vainly dropped a wing, or sidled up to a partlet. He can no more crow than a hen. Byron makes love like Sir Peter, Moore like a tom-tit and

Hunt like a bantam." The writer then charges Hunt with irreligion, indecency, sensuality and licentiousness. He is called "A Fool" and an "exquisite idiot." Such a burst of rage on the part of the anti-Cockneys, after their wrath had begun to cool as seen in the review of the *Literary Pocket Book*, was doubtless due to Hunt's association in *The Liberal* with Byron: "What can Byron mean by patronizing a Cockney? . . . by far the most unaccountable of God's works . . . a scavenger raking in the filth of the common sewers and stews, for a few gold pieces thrown down by a nobleman. . . . But that Satan should stoop to associate with an incubus, shows that there is degeneracy in hell." The tirade closes with a poem of six stanzas of which this is a fair sample:

"The kind Cockney Monarch, he bids us farewell
Taking his place in the Leghorn-bound smack—
In the smack, in the smack—Ah! will he ne'er come back?"

At the appearance of the last number of *The Liberal*, *Blackwood's* rejoiced thus:

"Their hum, to be sure, is awfully subdued. They remind me of a mutch-kin of wasps in a bottle, all sticking to each other—heads and tails—rumps glued with treacle and vinegar, wax and pus—helpless, hopeless, stingless, wingless, springless—utterly abandoned of air—choked and choking—mutually entangling and entangled—and mutually disgusting and disgusted—the last blistering ferment of incarnate filth working itself into one mass of oblivion in one bruised and battered sprawl of swipes and venom."⁵⁰

Blackwood's of October, 1823, declared Hazlitt to be the most loathsome and Hunt the most ludicrous of the group. Before the close of the year Hunt threatened the magazine with a suit for libel. This threat did not prevent in January a notice of Hunt's *Ultra-Crepidarius*, a satire on Gifford much in the vein and style of the *Feast of the Poets*. Mercury and Venus come to earth in search of the former's lost shoe. On their arrival they discover that it has been converted by command of the gods into a man named Gifford. The satire is facetiously attributed by *Blackwood's* to Master Hunt, aged ten; a "small, smart, smattering satirist of an air-haparent

⁵⁰ September, 1823.

. . . Cockney chick." The parent is reproached for putting a child in such a position.

"Had Leigh Hunt, the papa, boldly advanced on any great emergency, at the peril of his life and crown, to snatch the legitimate issue of his own loins from the shrivelled hands of some blear-eyed old beldam, into whose small cabbage-garden Maximilian had headed a forlorn hope, good and well, and beautiful; but not so, when a stalwart and cankered carl like Mr. Gifford, with his quarter-staff, belabours the shoulders of his Majesty, and sire shoves son between himself and the Pounder . . . such pusillanimity involves forfeiture of the Crown, and from this hour we declare Leigh dethroned, and the boy-bard of *Ultra-Crepidarius* King of Cockaigne."

Wearying of this make-believe, the reviewer discards such a possibility of authorship and considers Hunt's grandfather, a legendary personage whose age is put at ninety-six and who is given the name of Zachariah Hunt: "What a gross, vulgar, leering old dog it is! Was ever the couch of the celestials so profaned before! One thinks of some aged cur, with mangy back, glazed eye-balls dropping rheum, and with most disconsolate muzzard muzzling among the fleas of his abominable loins, by some accident lying upon the bed where Love and Beauty are embracing and embraced." As a final potentiality the reviewer deliberates whether Hunt by any possibility could have been the author and closes with this peroration: "There he goes soaking, and swaling, and straddling up the sky, like Daniel O'Rourke on goose back! . . . Toes in if you please. The goose is galloping—why don't you stand in the stirrups? . . . Alas Pegasus smells his native marshes; instead of making for Olympus, he is off in a wallop to the fens of Lincolnshire! Bellerophon has lost his seat—now he clings desperately by the tail—a single feather holds him from eternity."

Article VIII of the regular series, reviewing Hunt's *Bacchus in Tuscany*, appeared in *Blackwood's* of August, 1825. His allegiance to Apollo in Cockaigne is declared to have been changed to Bacchus in Tuscany, and his usual beverage of weak tea to a diet of wine on which he swills like a hippopotamus. He is depicted as Jupiter Tonans and his manner to Hebe is compared with a "natty Bagman to the barmaid of the Hen and Chickens." The same number noticed Sotheby's

translation of Homer. The opportunity was not lost to refer unfavorably to Hunt's translations of the same in *Foliage*.

The Rebellion of the Beasts; or The Ass is Dead! Long Live the Ass!!! By a Late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, with the motto "A man hath pre-eminence above a beast," was published anonymously by J. & H. L. Hunt in London in 1825. There is every reason to believe that it was by Hunt, although he does not mention it elsewhere. It is an exceedingly clever satire on monarchy and far surpasses anything else of the kind that he ever did. Had the Tories of Edinburgh suspected the author it would probably have made them apoplectic with rage.

With *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries* the rage of the two periodicals reached a grand climax and seemingly exhausted itself. The *Quarterly* in March of the same year in which it appeared said: "The last wiggle of expiring imbecility appears in these days to be a volume of personal Reminiscences." It characterized the book as a melancholy product of coxcombry and cockneyism: as "dirty gabble about men's wives and men's mistresses—and men's lackeys, and even the mistresses of the lackeys:" as "the miserable book of a miserable man; the little airy fopperies of its manner are like the fantastic trip and convulsive simpers of some poor worn-out wanton, struggling between famine and remorse, leering through her tears." *Blackwood's* of the same month pictured Hunt riding in the tourney lists of Cockaigne to the tune of Cock-a-doodle-doo. It accused him, besides those misdemeanors many times previously exploited, of clumsy casuistry, of falsehood regarding his transaction with Colburn, of ill-breeding in dragging his wife into such a book. The following is the culmination of the author's anger:

"Mr. Hunt, who to the prating pertness of the parrot, the chattering impudence of the magpie—to say nothing of the mowling malice of the monkey—adds the hissiness of the bill-pouting gander, and the gobble-bluster of the bubbly-jock—to say nothing of the forward valour of the brock or badger—threatens death and destruction to all writers of prose or verse, who shall dare to say white is the black of his eye, or that his book is not like a vase lighted up from within with the torch of truth . . . Frezeland Bantam is the vainest bird that attempts to crow; and by and by our feverish friend comes out into the light, and begins to trim his

plumage! His toilet over he basks on the ditch side, and has not the smallest doubt in the world that he is a Bird of Paradise."

The *Literary Gazette* joined in the hue-and-cry against "the pert vulgarity and miserable low-mindedness of Cockney-land," against "the disagreeable, envious, bickering, hating, slandering, contemptible, drivelling and be-devilling wretches."⁵¹ *Blackwood's* of February, 1830, in a review of Moore's *Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, satirizes the conversational habits of the Cockneys "who all keep chattering during meals and after them, like so many monkeys, emulous and envious of each other's eloquence, and pulling out with their paws fetid observations from their cheek-pouches, which are nuts to them, though instead of kernel, nothing but snuff."

Not only did the articles in *Blackwood's* cease after this last, but in 1834 a full and complete apology was tendered Hunt by Christopher North:

"And Shelley truly loved Leigh Hunt. Their friendship was honorable to both, for it was as disinterested as sincere; and I hope Gurney will let a certain person in the City understand that I treat his offer of a reviewal of Mr. Hunt's *London Journal* with disdain. If he has anything to say against us or that gentleman, either conjunctly or severally, let him out with it in some other channel; and I promise him a touch and taste of the crutch. He talks to me of *Maga's* desertion of principle; but if he were a Christian—nay, a man—his heart and his head would tell him that the Animosities are mortal, but the Humanities live for ever—and that Leigh Hunt has more talent in his little finger than the puling prig, who has taken upon himself to lecture Christopher North in a scrawl crawling with forgotten falsehoods."⁵²

Professor Wilson's invitation to Hunt to contribute to his magazine was declined politely but firmly. Leigh Hunt wrote to Charles Cowden Clarke: "*Blackwood's* and I, poetically, are becoming the best friends in the world. The other day there was an Ode in *Blackwood* in honour of the memory of Shelley; and I look for one of Keats. I hope this will give you faith in glimpses of the Golden Age."⁵³ Nowhere

⁵¹ Reprinted in the *Museum of Foreign Literature*, XII, p. 568.

⁵² August, 1834, XXVI, p. 273.

⁵³ C. C. Clarke, *Recollections of Writers*, p. 244. The year in which the letter was written is not given, but it must fall within the years 1833-1840, the period of Hunt's residence at Chelsea.

does Hunt show resentment or malice for the sufferings of years. Yet Mrs. Oliphant, in her advocacy of the Blackwood group, goes the length of saying that he displayed "feebleness of mind and body," "petty meannesses," "unwillingness or incapacity to take a high view even of friends or benefactors," a lightheartedness and frivolity, and "enduring spite." She grudgingly admits his "almost feminine grace and charm." She says that he thought his friends deserved only "casual thanks when they did what was but their manifest duty . . . bitter and spiteful satire when they attended to their own affairs instead." She makes a radically false statement when she says that he defended Byron, Shelley, Keats, Moore, and many others in *The Examiner*, but found an opportunity to say an evil word of most of them afterwards; and that when *Blackwood's* or the *Quarterly* attacked him, he was convinced that "it must be really one of his friends who was being struck at through him."⁵⁴

The *Quarterly* delayed longer in assuming a friendly attitude. It remained silent until 1867, when Bulwer, in a comparison of Hunt and Hazlitt, conceded to the former a gracefulness and kindness of disposition, a smoothness of tone and delicacy of finish in his writing. There was no formal apology as in the case of *Blackwood's*.

Carlyle says that Hunt suffered an "obloquy and calumny through the Tory press—perhaps a greater quantity of baseness, persevering, implacable calumny, than any other living writer has undergone; which long course of hostility . . . may be regarded as the beginning of his worst distresses, and a main cause of them down to this day."⁵⁵ Macaulay said: "There is hardly a man living whose merits have been so grudgingly allowed, and whose faults have been so cruelly expiated."⁵⁶ For a period of more than a quarter of a century, from the beginning of the crusade against him until about 1845, partly as the result of the misrepresentation of the press,

⁵⁴ *The Victorian Age*, I, pp. 94-101.

⁵⁵ Hunt, *Autobiography*, II, p. 267.

⁵⁶ *Critical, Historical and Miscellaneous Essays*, New York and Boston, 1860, IV, p. 350.

and partly as a natural consequence of his own foibles and early blunders, a pretty general antagonism existed against him. At the end of that time his honesty and talents were recognized and rewarded publicly by the government. And the public has come more and more to esteem his personal character.

The *Quarterly* of April, 1818, contained the stupid and savage review of *Endymion*, provoked almost solely by the Keats's offence in being the friend and public protégé of Leigh Hunt. The simple and manly preface⁵⁷ was misconstrued into a formula for Huntian poetry, and its allusion to a "London drizzle or a Scotch mist" into a "deprecation of criticism in a feverish manner." Leigh Hunt asked years afterwards how "anybody could answer such an appeal to the mercy of strength with the cruelty of weakness. All the good for which Mr. Gifford pretended to be zealous, he might have effected with pain to no one, and glory to himself; and therefore all the evil he mixed with it was of his own making."⁵⁸ The general trend of the article and the reviewer's acknowledgment that he had read only the first book of the poem are well known. The following passage refers directly to Keats's connection with Hunt:

"The author is a copyist of Mr. Hunt, but he is more unintelligible, almost as rugged, twice as diffuse, and ten times more tiresome and absurd than his prototype; who, though he impudently presumed to seat himself in the chair of criticism, and to measure his own poetry by his own standard, yet generally had a meaning. But Mr. Keats advanced no dogmas which he was bound to support by examples; his nonsense is therefore quite gratuitous; he writes it for his own sake, and, being bitten by Mr. Leigh Hunt's insane criticism, more than rivals the insanity of his poetry."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ The first preface to *Endymion* was rejected by Keats on the advice of his friends who thought that it was in the vain yet deprecating tone of Hunt's prefaces. To this charge Keats replied: "I am not aware that there is anything like Hunt in it (and if there is, it is my natural way, and I have something in common with Hunt)." The second preface justifies the charge.

⁵⁸ *London Journal*, January 21, 1835.

⁵⁹ Of Southey's attack on Hunt and others in May, 1818, Keats wrote: "I have more than a laurel from the Quarterly Reviewers, for they have smothered me in 'Foliage.'" (*Works*, IV, p. 115.)

Blackwood's followed the *Quarterly's* lead in August, reviewing Keats's first volume at the same time with *Endymion*. He is reproached with madness, with metromania, with low origin, with perversion of talents suited only to an apprenticeship, all because he admired Hunt sufficiently to adopt some of his theories and because he had been called in *The Examiner* one of "two stars of glorious magnitude." The sonnet *Written on the day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left prison*, the *Sonnet to Haydon*, and *Sleep and Poetry*, are anathematized. In the last Keats is said to speak with

"contempt of some of the most exquisite spirits that the world ever produced, merely because they did not happen to exert their faculties in laborious affected descriptions of flowers seen in window-pots, or cascades heard at Vauxhall; in short, because they chose to be wits, philosophers, patriots, and poets, rather than to found the Cockney school of versification, morality and politics, a century before its time. After blaspheming himself into a fury against Boileau, etc., Mr. Keats comforts himself and his readers with a view of the present more promising state of affairs; above all, with the ripened glories of the poet of *Rimini*."

The denunciation of the "calm, settled, drivelling idiocy" of *Endymion* in the same article is famous, but in a discussion of the Cockney School it is well to recall the following:

"From his prototype Hunt, John Keats has acquired a sort of vague idea, that the Greeks were a most tasteful people, and that no mythology can be so finely adopted for the purpose of poetry as theirs. It is amusing to see what a hand the Cockneys make of this mythology; the one confesses that he never read the Greek Tragedians and the other knows Homer only from Chapman; and both of them write about Apollo, Pan, Nymphs, Muses, and Mysteries, as might be expected from persons of their education. We shall not, however, enlarge at present upon this subject, as we mean to dedicate an entire paper to the classical attainments and attempts of the Cockney poets."

The versification is said to expose the defects of Hunt's system ten times more than Hunt's own poetry. The mocking close is as follows: "It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop, Mr. John, back to 'plasters, pills, and ointment boxes,' etc. But, for Heaven's sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of extenuatives and soporifics in your practice than you have been in your poetry."

The delusion that these articles were the direct cause of Keats's death, an impression given wide currency by the passages in *Adonais*⁶⁰ and *Don Juan*,⁶¹ has long since been dispelled by the evidence of Hunt,⁶² Fanny Brawne, C. C. Clarke and, most important of all, Keats's own letters.⁶³ It is not likely that he was affected by them as much as either Hunt or Hazlitt, for he showed more indifference and greater dignity under fire than either. His courage and his craving for future fame do not seem to have wavered during the year in which they appeared. Joseph Severn has testified that he never heard Keats mention *Blackwood's* and that he considered what his friend endured from the press as "one of the least of his miseries"; that he knew so little about the whole matter that when he met Sir Walter Scott in Rome many years after he was at a loss to understand Scott's embarrassment when Keats's name was mentioned; and it was not until a friend afterwards explained that Scott was connected with one of the magazines which was popularly supposed to have caused Keats's death that he could fathom it.⁶⁴

It would have been impossible for a more obtuse man than Leigh Hunt not to have realized from the import of these two articles that Keats was abused largely because of the association with himself and, but for that, might have remained in peaceful obscurity. Hunt therefore wisely refrained from further defense as it would only have made matters worse. During the year 1818 only one notice of Keats appeared in

⁶⁰ Shelley wrote also a letter to the *Quarterly Review* remonstrating against its treatment of Keats but the letter was never sent. (Milnes, *Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats*, I, p. 208 ff.)

⁶¹ In *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, Hunt states that he informed Byron of his mistake and received a promise that it would be altered, but that the rhyme about *article* and *particle* was too good to throw away (p. 266).

⁶² Just before leaving England, Keats with Hunt visited the house where Tom had died. He told Hunt in this connection that he was "dying of a broken heart." (*Literary Examiner*, 1823, p. 117.)

⁶³ *Works*, IV, pp. 42-43, 169-171, 174, 177, 194; V, pp. 27, 29.

⁶⁴ *Atlantic Monthly*, XI, p. 406.

The Examiner.⁶⁵ During the same year three sonnets to Keats appeared in *Foliage*. Yet it has been several times stated that Hunt forsook Keats at this time. Keats, under the hallucination of disease himself, accused Hunt of neglect, yet there were three reasons which made a persistent defense on the part of Hunt not to be expected. First, he was unaware, according to his own statement, of the extent of the defamation; second, he realized that his championship and friendship had been the original cause of wrath in the enemies' camp against Keats and that any activity on his part would only incense them further,⁶⁶ and third, he did not approve of Keats's only publication of that year and could not give it his support, as he frankly told Keats himself. Mr. Forman and Mr. Rossetti both scout the idea of disertion and disloyalty. Yet Mr. Hall Caine has made much⁶⁷ of a charge which has been denied by Hunt and ultimately repudiated by Keats. He has, moreover, overlooked the fact that Hunt's bitter satire, *Ultra-Crepidarius*, was written in 1818 as a reply to Keats's critics but was withheld from publication, presumably only for reasons of prudence, until 1823. When Keats's feeling on the subject was brought to his knowledge years later, Hunt wrote:

"Keats appears to have been of opinion that I ought to have taken more notice of what the critics said against him. And perhaps I ought. My notices of them may not have been sufficient. I may have too much contented myself with panegyriizing his genius, and thinking the objections to it of no ultimate importance. Had he given me a hint to another effect, I should have acted upon it. But in truth, as I have before intimated, I did not see a twentieth part of what was said against us; nor

⁶⁵ October 11, 1818. It included two reprints from other papers. The first was a letter taken from the *Morning Chronicle* signed J. S. It predicted that if Keats would "apostatise his friendship, his principles, and his politics (if he have any) he may even command the approbation of the *Quarterly Review*." This was followed by extracts from an article by John Hamilton Reynolds in the *Alfred Exeter Paper* praising Keats for his power of vitalizing heathen mythology and for his resemblance to Chapman and calling Gifford "a Lottery Commissioner and Government Pensioner" who persecuted Keats by "intrigue of literature and contrivance of political parties."

⁶⁶ Dante Gabriel Rossetti suggests this possibility in a letter to Mr. Hall Caine. (Caine, *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, p. 179.)

⁶⁷ *Cobwebs of Criticism*, p. 137.

had I the slightest notion, at that period, that he took criticism so much to heart. I was in the habit, though a public man, of living in a world of abstractions of my own; and I regarded him as of a nature still more abstracted, and sure of renown. Though I was a politician (so to speak), I had scarcely a political work in my library. Spensers and Arabian Tales filled up the shelves; and Spenser himself was not remoter, in my eyes, from all the common-places of life, than my new friend. Our whole talk was made up of idealisms. In the streets we were in the thick of the old woods. I little suspected, as I did afterwards, that the hunters had struck him; and never at any time did I suspect that he could have imagined it desired by his friends. Let me quit the subject of so afflicting a delusion.”⁶⁸

The *Edinburgh Review* of August, 1820, discussed *Endymion* and the 1820 volume. While it lamented the extravagances and obscurities, the “intoxication of sweetness” and the perversion of rhyme, it gave Keats due credit for his genius and his appreciation of the spirit of poetry. Hunt’s review of *Lamia*⁶⁹ and the other poems of the 1820 volume appeared in *The Indicator* of the same month. *Blackwood’s* answered the next month, abusing Hunt roundly and faintly praising the poems. The following proves that their chief object was to strike Hunt through Keats:

“It is a pity that this young man, John Keats, author of *Endymion*, and some other poems, should have belonged to the Cockney School—for he is evidently possessed of talents that, under better direction, might have done very considerable things. As it is, he bids fair to sink himself beneath such a mass of affectation, conceit, and Cockney pedantry, as I never expected to see heaped together by anybody, except the first founder of the School . . . There is much merit in some of the stanzas of Mr. Keats’s last volume, which I have just seen; no doubt he is a fine feeling lad—and I hope he will live to despise Leigh Hunt and be a poet.”

Hazlitt, in May of the next year wrote of the persecution of Keats in the *Edinburgh Review*:

“Nor is it only obnoxious writers on politics themselves, but all their friends and acquaintances, and those whom they casually notice, that come under their sweeping anathema. It is proper to make a clear stage. The friends of Caesar must not be suspected of an amicable intercourse with patriotic and incendiary writers. A young poet comes forward; an early and favourable notice appears of some boyish verses of his in the *Examiner*, independently of all political opinion. That alone decides fate; and from

⁶⁸ *Autobiography*, II, p. 43.

⁶⁹ See p. 50 ff.

that moment he is set upon, pulled in pieces, and hunted into his grave by the whole venal crew in full cry after him. It was crime enough that he dared to accept praise from so disreputable a quarter."

In a letter from Hunt in Italy to *The Examiner*, July 7, 1822, an inquiry is made why Mr. Gifford has never noticed Keats's last volume: "that beautiful volume containing *Lamia*, the story from Boccaccio, and that magnificent fragment *Hyperion*?" *Blackwood's* of August replied to these two defenses in a tirade of twenty-two pages against the *Edinburgh Review*, Hazlitt, and Hunt. The *Noctes Ambrosianae* of October continued in the same strain and, though the grave should have protected Keats from such banter, revived the old allusions to the apothecary and his pills.

In self defense against the charge, that its attacks and those of the *Quarterly* had broken Keats's heart, *Blackwood's* in January, 1826, said that it alone had dealt with Keats, Shelley and Procter with "common sense or common feeling"; that, seeing Keats in the road to ruin with the Cockneys, it had "tried to save him by wholesome and severe discipline—they drove him to poverty, expatriation and death." The most remarkable part of this remarkable justification is this: "Keats outhunted Hunt in a species of emasculated pruriency, that, although invented in Little Britain, looks as if it were the prospect of some imaginative Eunuch's muse within the melancholy inspiration of the Haram"(sic).

In March, 1828, in a review of *Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries*, the *Quarterly* seized the opportunity to revert to the author's friendship for Keats in its old hostile manner; and, in a criticism of Coleridge's poems in August, 1834, to speak of his "dreamy, half-swooning style of verse criticised by Lord Byron (in language too strong for print) as the fatal sin of Mr. John Keats." Finally in March, 1840, in *Journalism in France*, there is another feeble effort at defense; a resentment of the "twaddle" against the *Quarterly* "when they had the misfortune to criticise a sickly poet, who died soon afterwards, apparently for the express purpose of dishonoring us."

One of Hunt's utterances in regard to Keats and his critics disposes finally of the matter: "his fame may now forgive the

critics who disliked his politics, and did not understand his poetry.”⁷⁰

From Italy Shelley wrote to Peacock:

“I most devoutly wish I were living near London. . . . My inclination points to Hampstead; but I do not know whether I should not make up my mind to something more completely suburban. What are mountains, trees, heaths, or even glorious and ever beautiful sky, with such sunsets as I have seen at Hampstead, to friends? Social enjoyment, in some form or other, is the Alpha and the Omega of existence. All that I see in Italy—and from my tower window I now see the magnificent peaks of the Apennine half enclosing the plain—is nothing. It dwindles into smoke in the mind, when I think of some familiar forms of scenery, little perhaps in themselves, over which old remembrances have thrown a delightful colour.”⁷¹

The attacks of the *Quarterly* of May, 1818, on Shelley's private life and of April, 1819, on the *Revolt of Islam*, and the reply of *The Examiner*, have already been discussed on p. 77 of the third chapter. The assault was renewed in October, 1821. The dominating characteristic of Shelley's poetry is said to be “its frequent and total want of meaning.” In *Prometheus Unbound* there were said to be many absurdities “in defiance of common sense and even of grammar . . . a mere jumble of words and heterogeneous ideas, connected by slight and accidental associations, among which it is impossible to distinguish the principal object from the accessory.” The poem is declared to be full of “flagrant offences against morality and religion” and the poet to have gone out of his way to “revile Christianity and its author.” As a final verdict the reviewer says: “Mr. Shelley's poetry is, in sober sadness, *drivelling prose run mad* . . . Be his private qualities what they may, his poems . . . are at war with reason, with taste, with virtue, in short, with all that dignifies man, or that man reveres.” The *London Literary Gazette* joined its forces to the *Quarterly* and scored *Prometheus Unbound* in 1820, *Queen Mab* in 1821. *The Examiner* of June 16, 23 and July 7, 1822, contained Hunt's answer to the two onslaughts. He accused the writer in the *Quarterly* of having used six stars to indicate an omission, in order to imply that the name of Christ had been blas-

⁷⁰ *Imagination and Fancy*, p. 230.

⁷¹ Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, II, p. 274.

phemously used; of having put quotation marks to sentences not in the author criticised and of having intentionally left out so much at times as to make the context seem absurd. At the same time Hunt stated that he agreed that Shelley's poetry was of "too abstract and metaphysical a cast . . . too wilful and gratuitous in its metaphors"; and that it would have been better if he had kept metaphysics and polemics out of poetry. But at the same time he asserted that Shelley had written much that was unmetaphysical and poetically beautiful, as *The Cenci*, the *Ode to a Skylark* and *Adonais*. Of the second he wrote: "I know of nothing more beautiful than this,—more choice of tones, more natural in words, more abundant in exquisite, cordial, and most poetic associations." He characterized Southey's reviews as cant, Gifford's as bitter commonplace and Croker's as pettifogging.

Blackwood's reviewed *Adonais* and *The Cenci* in December, 1821. The Della Crusicans were reported to have come again from "retreats of Cockney dalliance in the London suburbs" and "by wainloads from Pisa." The Cockneys were said to hate everything that was good and true and honorable, all moral ties and Christian principles, and to be steeped in desperate licentiousness. *Adonais* is fifty-five stanzas of "intelligible stuff" made up of every possible epithet that the poet has been able to "conglomerate in his piracy through the Lexicon." The sense has been wholly subordinated to the rhymes. The author is a "glutton of names and colours" and has accomplished no more than might be done on such subjects as Mother Goose, Waterloo or Tom Thumb. Two cruel and loathsome parodies follow: *W'outh'er the city marshal broke his leg* and an *Elegy on My Tom Cat*, which, it is claimed, are less nonsensical, verbose and inflated than *Adonais*. *The Cenci* is "a vulgar vocabulary of rottenness and reptilism" in an "odiferous, colorific and daisy-enamoured style." It is regretted by the writer that it is impossible to believe that Shelley's reason is unsettled, for this would be the best apology for the poem.⁷²

⁷² Other hostile reviews of *The Cenci* appeared in the *Literary Gazette* of April 1, 1820; the *Monthly Magazine* of the same month; and the *London Magazine* of May of the same year.

When *The Liberal* was organized Shelley was spoken of thus:

"But Percy Bysshe Shelly has now published a long series of poems, the only object of which seems to be the promotion of *atheism* and *incest*; and we can no longer hesitate to avow our belief, that he is as worthy of co-operating with the King of Cockaigne, as he is unworthy of co-operating with Lord Byron. Shelley is a man of genius, but he has no sort of sense or judgment. He is merely 'an inspired idiot.' Leigh Hunt is a man of talents, but vanity and vulgarity neutralize all his efforts to pollute the public mind. Lord Byron we regard not only as a man of lofty genius, but of great shrewdness and knowledge of the world. What can HE seriously hope from associating his name with such people as these?"⁷²

As in the case of Keats, *Blackwood's* did not have the decency to desist from its indecent articles after Shelley's death. September, 1824, this vulgar ridicule of the two dead poets appeared in answer to Bryan Waller Procter's review of Shelley's poems in the preceding number of the *Edinburgh Review*:

"Mr. Shelley died, it seems, with a volume of Mr. Keats's poetry grasped with the hand in his bosom—rather an awkward posture, as you will be convinced if you try it. But what a rash man Shelley was, to put to sea in a frail boat with Jack's poetry on board. Why, man, it would sink a trireme. In the preface to Mr. Shelley's poems we are told that his 'vessel bore out of sight with a favorable wind;' but what is that to the purpose? It had Endymion on board, and there was an end. Seventeen ton of pig iron would not be more fatal ballast. Down went the boat with a 'swirl'! I lay a wager that it righted soon after evicting Jack."

In the face of these articles against it as evidence, *Blackwood's*, as early as January, 1828, had the audacity to claim—perhaps with the expectation that its audience was gifted with a sense of subtle humor—that Shelley had been praised in its pages for his fortitude, patience, and many other noble qualities, and that this praise had irritated the other Cockneys and made the whole trouble. If Keats suffered at the hands of the Edinburgh dictators for his association with Hunt the balance weighed in the other direction in the case of Shelley. All the crimes and opinions of which he was deemed guilty were passed on to Hunt. But Hunt gladly suffered for Shelley.

⁷² *Blackwood's*, January, 1822.

Hazlitt, although of Irish descent and a native of Shropshire, and of such independence as to belong to no school whatsoever, came in for a share of abuse second only in virulence to that showered on Hunt.⁷⁴ In the *Quarterly* of April, 1817, in a review of the *Round Table*, probably in retaliation for his abuse of Southey in *The Examiner*, Hazlitt's papers are denominated "vulgar descriptions, silly paradoxes, flat truisms, misty sophistry, broken English, ill-humour and rancorous abuse." His characterizations of Pitt and Burke are "vulgar and foul invective," and "loathsome trash." The author might have described washerwomen forever, the reviewer asserts, "but if the creature, in his endeavours to see the light, must make his way over the tombs of illustrious men, disfiguring the records of their greatness with the slime and filth which marks his tracks, it is right to point out that he may be flung back to the situation in which nature designed that he should grovel."

The *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* was made an excuse for dissecting the morals and understanding of this "poor cankered creature."⁷⁵ The *Lectures on the English Poets* is characterized as a "third predatory incursion on taste and common sense . . . either completely unintelligible, or exhibits only faint and dubious glimpses of meaning . . . of that happy texture that leaves not a trace in the mind of either reader or hearer."⁷⁶ The *Political Essays* was said to mark the writer as a death's head hawk-moth, a creature already placed in a state of damnation, the drudge of *The Examiner*, the ward of Billingsgate, the slanderer of the human race, one of the plagues of England.⁷⁷ Later, in a discussion of *Table Talk*,⁷⁸ he becomes a "Slang-Whanger" ("a gabbler who employs slang to amuse the rabble").

Hazlitt's *Letter to Gifford*, 1819, was a reply to all previous attacks of the *Quarterly*. For a pamphlet of eighty-seven pages on such a subject it is "lively reading," for Hazlitt, like Burke, as Mr. Birrell has remarked, excelled in a quarrel.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Alexander Ireland has pointed out curious correspondences in the lives and intrests of Hazlitt and Hunt. (*Memoir of Hazlitt*, pp. 474-476.)

⁷⁵ *Quarterly*, May, 1818.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, July, 1819.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, December, 1818.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, October, 1821.

⁷⁹ Birrell, *William Hazlitt*, New York, 1902, p. 147.

He calls Gifford a cat's paw, the Government critic, the paymaster of the band of Gentleman Pensioners, a nuisance, a

"dull, envious, pragmatism, low-bred man. . . . Grown old in the service of corruption, he drivels on to the last with prostituted impotence and shameless effrontery; salves a meagre reputation for wit, by venting the dribbles and spleen of his wrath on others; answers their arguments by confuting himself; mistakes habitual obtuseness of intellect for a particular acuteness; not to be imposed upon by shallow appearances; unprincipled rancour for zealous loyalty; and the irritable, discontented, vindictive, peevish effusions of bodily pain and mental imbecility for proofs of refinement of taste and strength of understanding."⁸⁰

Blackwood's had accepted abstracts of Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets*⁸¹ from P. G. Patmore without comment and even managed a lengthy comparison of Jeffrey and Hazlitt with an approach to fair dealing. But by August, 1818, he had been identified with the "Cockney crew" and he became "that wild, black-bill Hazlitt," a "lounge in third-rate book-shops"; and as a critic of Shakspeare, a gander gabbling at that "divine swan." In April of the following year he was christened the "Aristotle" of the Cockneys. His *Table Talk* provoked ten pages of vituperation,⁸² and *Liber Amoris*, two reviews as coarse as the provocation.⁸³ In the first of these, apropos of his contributions to the *Edinburgh Review* and in particular of his article on the *Periodical Press of Britain*, the downfall of the magazine and its editor is announced as certain. Hazlitt is called a literary flunky, a sore, an ulcer, a poor devil. In the second he is Hunt's orderly, the "Mars of the Hampstead heavy dragoons."

Hazlitt found relief for his feelings by threatening *Blackwood's* with a lawsuit. Yet in July, 1824, appeared an elaborate comparison of Hunt and Hazlitt in *Blackwood's* choicest manner and in March, 1825, a review of the *Spirit of the Age*.

⁸⁰ *The Examiner* of March 7 and 14, 1819, contained extracts from the *Letter* and comments by Hunt upon this "quint-essential salt of an epistle," as he called it. Lamb's *Letter to Southey*, already referred to, contained a defense of Hazlitt as well as of Hunt.

⁸¹ February, 1818-April, 1819.

⁸² August, 1822.

⁸³ August, 1823; October, 1823.

After 1828 the defamatory articles ceased entirely. In 1867 appeared what might be construed into an attempt at reparation by Bulwer-Lytton. Hazlitt was still spoken of as the most aggressive of the Cockneys, discourteous and unscrupulous, a bitter politician who would substitute universal submission to Napoleon for established monarchical institutions; but he is credited with strong powers of reason, of judicial criticism and of metaphysical speculation, and with perception of sentiment, truth and beauty.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

It is curious that, in the lives of three such geniuses as Shelley, Byron and Keats a man of lesser gifts and of weaker fibre should have played so large a part as did Leigh Hunt. It is more curious in view of the fact that the period of intimate association in each case extended over only a few years. The explanation must be sought in the accident of the age and in the personality of the man himself. It was an era of stirring action and of strong feeling. Men were clamoring for freedom from the trammels of the past and were pressing forward to the new day. Through the union of some of the qualities of the pioneer and of the prophet, Leigh Hunt was thrust into a position of prominence that he might not have gained at any other time, for he lacked the vital requisites of true leadership.

His personal quality was as rare as his opportunity. He had a personal ascendancy, a strange fascination born of the sympathy and chivalry, the sweetness and joyousness of his nature. An exotic warmth and glow worked its spell upon those about him. Barry Cornwall said that he was a "compact of all the spring winds that blew." His loveliness and very "genius for friendship" bound intimately to him those who were thus attracted. There was, besides, an elusiveness and an ethereality about him—as Carlyle expressed it—"a fine tricky medium between the poet and the wit, half a sylph and half an Ariel . . . a fairy fluctuating bark." The "vinous quality" of his mind, Hazlitt said, intoxicated those who came in contact with him.

In the case of Shelley it was Hunt the man, rather than the writer, that held him. Charm was the magnet in a friendship that, in its perfection and deep intimacy, deserves to be ranked with the fabled ones of old—a love passing the love of woman.

There is no single cloud of distrust or disloyalty in the whole story of their relations.

Second to the personal tie may be ranked Hunt's influence on Shelley's politics, greater in this instance than in the case of Byron or Keats. Hunt's attitude was an important factor in forming Shelley's political creed. With Godwin, he drew Shelley's attention from the creation of imaginary universes to the less speculative issues of earth. Indeed, Shelley's main reliance for a knowledge of political happenings during many years, and practically his only one for the last four years of his life, was *The Examiner*. He was guided and moderated by it in his general attitude. In the specific instances already cited, the stimulus for poems or the information for prose tracts and articles can be directly traced to Hunt.

In regard to literary art, Hunt did not affect Shelley beyond pointing the way to a freer use of the heroic couplet, and, in a limited degree, in four or five of his minor poems, influencing him in the use of a familiar diction. Only in his letters does Shelley show any inclination to emphasize "social enjoyments" or suburban delights. That the literary influence was so slight is not surprising when Shelley's powers of speculation and accurate scholarship are compared with Hunt's want of concentration and shallow attainments. Notwithstanding this intellectual gulf, strong convictions, with a moral courage sufficient to support them, and a congeniality of tastes and temperament, made possible an ideal comradeship.

Byron, like Shelley, was attracted by Hunt's charm of personality. An imprisoned martyr and a persecuted editor appealed to Byron's love of the spectacular. Political sympathy furthered the friendship. In a literary way, Byron influenced Hunt more than Hunt influenced him.

Their intercourse is the story of a pleasant acquaintance with a disagreeable sequel and much error on both sides. With two men of such varying caliber and tastes, the "wren and eagle" as Shelley called them, thrown together under such trying circumstances, it could hardly have been otherwise. Their love of liberty and courage of opposition were the only things in common. Byron recognized to the last Hunt's good

qualities and Hunt, except for the bitter years in Italy and immediately after his return, proclaimed Byron's genius; but, for all that, they were temperamentally opposed. Byron detested Hunt's small vulgarities as much as Hunt loathed Byron's assumed superiority.

The relation with Keats was the reverse of that in the other two cases. It was an intellectual affinity throughout. At no time were Keats and Hunt very close to each other. Nor, indeed, does Keats seem to have had the capacity for intimate friendship, except with his brothers and, possibly, Brown and Severn.

The intercourse of the two men had its disadvantages for Keats in an injurious influence on his early work and in the public association of his name with that of Hunt's; but the latter's literary patronage and loving interpretation when Keats was wholly unknown, the friendships made possible for him with others, the open home and tender care whenever needed, the unfailing sympathy, encouragement and admiration so freely given, the new fields of art, music and books opened up, and the pleasantness of the connection at the first, should more than compensate for the attacks which Keats suffered as a member of the Cockney School. From this view it seems very ungrateful of George Keats to have said that he was sorry that his brother's name should go down to posterity associated with Hunt's. Keats received far more than he gave in return.

Briefly stated, Keats's early work shows the marked influence of Hunt in the selection of subjects, in a love of Italian and older English literature, in the "domestic" touch, in the colloquial and feeble diction, and in the lapses of taste. It is only fair to Hunt to emphasize that this was not wholly a question of influence. It was due, as Keats himself confessed, to a natural affinity of gifts and tastes, though the one was so much more highly gifted than the other. Keats soon saw his mistake. *Endymion* showed a great improvement and the 1820 volume an almost complete absence of his own *bourgeois* tendencies and of the effect of Hunt's specious theories. Yet it was undoubtedly through Hunt that Keats in his later poems began to imitate Dryden.

In connection with the work of all three poets, Hunt's criticism is a more important fact of literary history than his services of friendship. He had, as Bulwer-Lytton has remarked, the first requisite of a good critic, a good heart. He had also wonderful sympathy with aspiring authorship. His insight was most remarkable of all in the appreciation of his contemporaries. With powers of critical perception that might be called an instinct for genius, he discovered Shelley and Keats and heralded them to the public. The same ability helped him to appreciate Byron, Hazlitt and Lamb. Browning, Tennyson and Rossetti were other young poets whom he encouraged and supported. He defended the Lake School in 1814 when it still had many deriders. He anticipated Arnold's judgment when he wrote that "Wordsworth was a fine lettuce, with too many outside leaves." As early as 1832 he wrote of the "wonderful works of Sir Walter Scott, the remarkable criticism of Hazlitt, the magnetism of Keats, the tragedy and winged philosophy of Shelley, the passion of Byron, the "art and festivity of Moore." To value correctly such criticism it is necessary to remember that the Romantic movement was still in its first youth at the time. His criticism of the three men in question, like his criticisms in general, is distinguished by great fairness and absence of all personal jealousy, by a delicacy of feeling that will not be fully felt until scattered notes and buried prefaces are gathered together. He was animated chiefly by an inborn love of poetry and enjoyment of all beautiful things. If he sometimes fell short in understanding Homer, Dante and Shakespeare, he was perfectly sincere and independent, and pretended nothing that he did not feel. His range of information was truly remarkable, though not deep and accurate. His style was slipshod. With the exception of the essay *What is Poetry*, he fails in concentration and generalization. He never clinched his results, but was forever flitting from one sweet to another. His method was impressionistic in its appreciation of physical beauty. There is no comprehension whatsoever of mystical beauty. It is the curious instance of a man of almost ascetic habits who revelled and luxuriated in the sensuous beauties of literature. The

reader of such books as *Imagination and Fancy* and the half dozen others of the same kind will see his wonderful power of selection. His attempt to interpret and "popularize literature"—a cause in which he laboured long and steadfastly—was one of the greatest services he rendered his age, even if his habit of italicization and running comment for the purpose of calling attention to perfectly patent beauties irritated some of his readers. His critical taste, when exercised on the work of others, was almost faultless. The occasional vulgarities of which he was guilty in his original work do not intrude here; they were superficial and were not a part of the man. Through his criticism he discovered and championed illustrious contemporaries; he instituted the Italian revival in creative literature in the early part of the century; he assisted in resuscitating the interest in sixteenth and seventeenth century literature.

Hunt's services of friendship to Byron, Shelley and Keats, his able criticism and just defense of them, have found their reward in the inseparable association of his name with their immortal ones. They easily surpassed him in every department of writing in which they contested, yet the *man* was strong and alluring enough in his relations with them to prove a determining and, on the whole, beneficent influence in their lives.

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